old man with rhetorical leanings and included things because they formed a nice rhyme, and, indeed, she was not far from the truth. Our monosyllabic language is a heavenly gift to us with its endless scope for the most unrestrained punning and rhyming; the pun in Burmese is not execrable humour but a stepping stone for flights of fancy. What my sister was not allowed to eat were the three most precious foods as proverbalised in: *a-thi-hma tha-yet; a-gwet hma la-hpet; a-tha hma wet:* among fruits the *tha-yet*, among leaves the *la-hpet*, among flesh the *wet: tha-yet, la-hpet* and *wet* being the mango, the pickled tea-leaf and the pig's flesh respectively, and open to question as being really the prize specimens of their class, but certainly rhyming happily.

My parents were so good to us; they never scolded, beat or punished us that I can remember. Perhaps they had both had so much discipline in their own youths; I can remember the day we were told to answer them "Father" and "Mother" when they called us, instead of *Paya* as we had done formerly. Paya is the term of extreme respect and humility, sometimes adopted by children to parents, always by servants to their superiors, by subordinates to senior officials, and by all to royalty and the clergy. It is also the suffix to honorific titles. Its true and ancient use had associations of reverence only, but it has taken on a more subservient hue with the advent of government and foreign officials.

But whether we answered Paya or Father, my mother's guiding influence led us to look on my father with awe, even though he was the parent who clowned with us at home. We were always bathed and dressed before he came home, waiting for him. As soon as he entered the gate we raced down the drive to carry his umbrella, took him upstairs and scrambled to take his shoes off as soon as we could get him seated. His shoes, suspenders and socks were removed by combined efforts, my father pretending great helplessness all the while. We went for walks while my parents went to play tennis, but returned in time to carry their racquets upstairs and remove my father's shoes again. After dinner my mother and we lay on mats while my father sat in an easy chair and pretended to get his nursery rhymes all wrong, until we taught him:

A-hpo gyi oh, hka kon kon,	Old man so bent and grey,
Ma thay ba hnin oln	Do not die as yet we pray.
Naung hnit-kha ta-saung-mon	Till next December try to tarry
Pwè kyi ba oln.	And watch the actors play and marry.

Or the voracious cat who ate everything:

Kyaung-gyi yè tè mi tan to	Oh you big and short tailed cat.
A-hsi ko sa ba lo	Swallowing the lean
A-tha ko myo.	And eating the fat.

873 Or, in less complimentary vain :

522 *Hsu Hsu pu pu* Boisterous shrew
Ma Ngan Chu. *Ma Ngan Chu.*

522 But only in a novel can justice be done to the sustained humour,
• 538 precision and allusiveness of colloquial speech. Proverbs may be a pointer, however, and the following, a few of the hundreds familiarly used by the normal Burman, are typical of the condensation of thought, the concrete nature of the allusions, and the witty rhyming usually present.

Kala ma-naing, *Ya-kaing mè.*	Can't get the better of the Indian, So the Arakanese is black.	Venting your wrath on a scapegoat.
Paya lè pu yin *Leiku lè tu yin.*	While worshipping at pagoda, Digging for turtle's eggs too.	Kill two birds with one stone.
Khat taing ngan-de *Pago hsa.*	O Pegu salt That flavours every ladleful.	The ubiquitous person.
Hsin pa-sat *Hnan-pet.*	Pelting the elephant's mouth With sesame seeds.	Five loaves and two fishes.
Kala taik *Kya win kaik.*	Into Indian building Tiger enters and bites.	Bedlam.
Mi-gyaung min *Yay gin pya.*	Showing the crocodile King The water tracks.	Teach Grandmother to suck eggs.
Thay yin myay gyi *Nay yin shway hti.*	Die, the earth ; Stay, the gold umbrella.	Do or die. Be corpse or King.
Taung hma a-kut *Meinma hma a-wut.*	As border to basket So dress to a woman.	
Shin bayin tahka htwet *Pe-gyi ta-lay kyet.*	One appearance of a King, One boatload of broad-beans can be cooked.	Person who is always late in appearing dressed.

to bring chairs, tables, food and attendants for the sum of Re. 1/4 per head. The tune which was written to sing sentimentally of the Isle of Capri now sang, with romping glee, the English names of these delicacies:

Vi-ta-mo, co-co *hnin amyo son myi*
Ham pattie, cream roll *hnin* cold coff-ee,
Columbia *dat pya hnin htè hso myi*,
Plain cake *hnin* Gold Flake *le kyamma wè myi*.
Etc.....

Vitamo, cocoa and all kinds you'll see,
Ham patties, cream rolls and cold coffee
With Columbia record playing merrily,
Plain cake and Gold Flake will I buy for tea.

Expensive things, expensive things of all kinds for eating,
I'll order from a restaurant for this fashion meeting.
Sit up round a table in gathering so hearty,
A very respectable tea-drinking party.

Don't eat of Burmese comestibles,
They are so indigestible.

On the other hand the lilting tune of the Campdown Races was slowed down to sing:

Chit-te thu ko tway hma tha,
Seik pyaw,
Aye da.

Only when you see the loved one,
Heart is happy,
Mind at rest.

Compared to dwellers of country towns, Yangonthu not only went to the cinema oftener, but also read a good deal more, probably in the absence of so many happy-eating-gatherings and charity feasts. There were four daily newspapers in Burmese and a few which appeared bi- or tri-weekly. The daily paper provided a lot of reading matter for the average person; a grandaunt of mine made it a daily institution to sit on her verandah with a bottle of lemonade and the *New Light of Burma* whose 24 pages were filled with international news, home politics, articles on the economic development of the country and attacks on abuses prevalent in social life, exhortations to good behaviour to the younger generation, reports of cases of a scandalous nature, just like a popular daily anywhere in the world. But in Burma there was no distinction such as exists between a paper which tries to keep a dignified

face, like the London *Times*, and papers which make sensational interest their strong point. Similarly, poetry and clear prose were not the monopoly of a class of intellectuals, although certain periodicals such as the *World of Books* endeavoured to contain only literary excellences; wit and vivid description could be present in the tuppenny novels. These two anna novels were largely drug-like and pornographic in nature. There was a great trade in them, about 30,000 being sold annually in Rangoon. Mobile circulating libraries functioned in the person of hawker boys who went round to houses, selling them at two annas each, returning the next week to buy the used copies back for one anna and selling a fresh lot. They also brought monthly magazines containing articles on a fairly wide variety of subjects. The following is a sample of the contents of one such popular magazine—costing 8 annas and read by all who read the tuppenny novels—*Kyi-Pwa-Yay*, PROGRESS-PROSPERITY, for September 1941.

Title		Description
Don't fear war	..	Wars are in the natural order of things, and we must not fear them but be ready to encounter them.
The Myook	..	Comic Verse.
Love and Vanity	..	Translation of English story with a moral.
Inscriptions of Pagan Period	..	Descriptive account of inscriptions in Pagan.
Win on Every Throw	..	Short story, set in gaming houses of Chinese quarter of Rangoon.
The True Burman	..	Instalment of series on muscular development.
Two Blossoms	..	Short story of a doctor's family in country town.
Impermanence of States and Races	..	Warning that the Burmese race may die out with wholesale settling of foreigners.
Biggest of their Kind	..	Information tit-bits.
Miss Fiery Temper	..	Love story of a bazaar girl.
Tour in Arakan	..	Factual and humourous account of visit to Arakan.

177. Villager ... Short story.
53 Are we seeing aright? .. Attack on prolonged nat-festivals at
204 pagodas, as endangering physical
•538 and moral welfare of people, including attack on worldly members of monkhood.

541 Horse-racing in Rangoon was a foreign importation, but nevertheless
177. the stadium was always filled, not only with the fashionable section in an
54 enclosure but also with rows of four-anna spectators who had been col-
369 lected from all the streets of the town by the privately-run Burmese buses which tore along on race days, with two "spares" (spare-men in addition to the driver) hanging out from the back step and shouting to all they passed: "Race-a-ko, Race-a-ko! Race-course, race-course." But in the country the traditional boat racing was still alive. Boat races were held in every village which had a stream of river, as an annual event after the Lenten season. Long narrow canoes built in the village itself were rowed by twenty-two men and put out in rivalry between quarter and quarter, or between one village and another. At Ye the upper street and lower street put out boats bearing names of prowess or aquatic grace. The cheering and betting raged more furious and wild with the manner of the finish: the winning post was a boat in the centre of the stream, equidistant from the tracks of each boat, and across this was laid a hollow cane sticking about three feet out on either side. Through the hollow was thrust the prize *pan*: flower (of victory), a stick with a flag on each end. The winning crew was to seize this flower before it could be called victorious, and thus a dead-heat often sent both crews tumbling into the water as they wrestled for the prize.

525 Burmans are said to have an irrepressible gambling spirit, even when no money is laid on. A stock example quoted by foreigners of the Burman's readiness with a dah in his hot temper, gives as provocation the anger worked up between two men who sit idly in a tea-shop, and for lack of amusement bet on the number of flies which will settle on the sugar bowl. I prefer the story of two street urchins, who saw two monks walking before them, sedately, with downcast eyes and steady pace, as monks should walk. "Look," says one idle urchin, "there are two hpongyis. You look at the one on the right, I'll watch the one the left. I bet you my hpongyi walks faster than your hpongyi." The monks ignore this, but soon begin to hear: "My holiness is going faster!" "No' mine!" Unobtrusively, each hpongyi tries to walk quicker and yet with dignity. The boys get thoroughly excited now. "*My* holiness!". "No, *my* holiness!" Soon the astonished spectators see two hpongyis

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CHAPTER VII

MARRIAGE

538 581 IN the Lawkanidi, the book of proverbs relating to ordinary life, it is said that monks and hermits are beautiful when they are lean; four-footed animals when they are fat; men when they are learned; and women when they are married. This recommendation to the married state is no 562 428 421 more needed by Burmese maidens than it is by their sisters in other parts of the world, and they have the further inducement that they enjoy a much freer and happier position than in any other Eastern country, and in some respects are better off even than women in England. All the money and possessions which a girl brings with her on marriage are kept carefully separate for the benefit of her children or heirs, and she carries her property away with her if she is divorced, besides anything she may have added to it in the interim by her own trading or by inheritance. Thus a married Burmese woman is much more independent than 562 584 any European even in the most advanced states. In the eyes of the Dammathat the old idea of the *patria potestas* prevails indeed, and woman is regarded as a simple chattel, belonging entirely to her parents, and to be disposed of by them without any reference to her personal inclinations; but, as a matter of fact, she may do pretty well as she pleases, may marry the youth on whom she has fixed her affections, and may separate herself from the husband who has offended her, by going before the village elders and stating her case; and if the complaint is just, her request is never refused.

As yet they have not begun to demand an equal share

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Little presents are exchanged. The *soupirant* brings a gay kerchief with some love-verses written on it, perhaps his own composition, more probably the erotic sighings of the prince in the last play he heard, or cribbed bodily from a song-book for Kālathas (Corinthians, lads of mettle). The girl gives him some green cheroots, rolled by her fair hands, or a brilliant woollen muffler which she has knitted; but there is never any of the kissing and caressing indulged in by more urgent foreign lovers. The girl would look upon any attempts of such a nature as highly indecorous, and no doubt it is quite unsuited to her clothing.

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When at last everything has been settled — parents' consent obtained, dowry fixed, and a fortunate day and hour pitched upon — the marriage ceremony comes off in the house of the bride's parents. The ritual is very simple and has nothing whatever of a religious character about it; in fact the celibate pôngyis would be grossly scandalised if they were asked to take any part in it. A great feast is prepared at the expense of the bridegroom or his parents. All the relations, friends, and neighbours are invited, and it is the publicity of the thing that is really the main feature of the ceremony. The old custom that the bride and bridegroom should join their right hands together, palm to palm, in the presence of all the assembled guests, and then should eat rice out of the same dish and feed each other with one or two morsels in turtle-dove fashion, has in many cases died out, and the eating and drinking, the talk of the men in the main room of the house and of the women in the inner apartment, is quite enough to solemnise the union. When the newly-married couple retire into the bridal chamber it is sometimes in the larger towns the custom to shower saffron-coloured rice on them, but this, like the entire seclusion in which the happy pair are supposed to pass the next seven days, is very seldom actually carried out.

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In the country villages, however, two ancient customs are still very generally prevalent. The one is to tie a string across the road along which the bridegroom must pass to the house of his intended. He comes in procession with all his friends, carrying the greater portion of the belongings

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wound round the body, kilt fashion, tucked in with a twist in front, and the portion which remains, gathered up and allowed to hang in folds from the waist, or thrown jauntily over the shoulder. The body is covered with a short white cotton jacket, over which another of dark or coloured cloth is often worn. Elderly people, and the wealthy of all ages, when they are paying a visit of ceremony or going to worship at the pagoda, wear a taing-mathein, a long white coat, open in front except at the throat, where it is tied, and reaching almost to the knees. Round the head a flowered silk handkerchief is loosely wound as a turban. The old wear a simple narrow fillet of white book-muslin round the temples and showing the hair. This is called a pawlôn.

The woman's tamein is a simple piece of cotton or silk, almost square, four feet and a half long by about five broad, and woven in two pieces of different patterns. This is wound tightly over the bosom, and fastened with a simple twist of the ends. The opening being in front, the symmetry of the thigh is displayed in walking, but a peculiar outward jerk of the heels which the girls acquire prevents any suggestion of immodesty. The loose cotton jacket is unhappily not so well contrived to display their charms. Over the shoulders is thrown a bright silk handkerchief, the same as that used by the men for turbans. Nothing is worn on the head except flowers twisted into the hair. Dressed in their best, the family sally forth in search of amusement. If it is a pwè, they will not get home till very late, possibly not till daybreak, when the yellow line of monks issuing forth on their matutinal tour may meet them at the monastery gate. A country dance naturally does not last nearly so long, though it is kept up much longer than most people would care to dance a hornpipe or even a minuet. But a still more favourite form of amusement is the entertainment of a sā-haw sayā, a kind of reciter or improvisatore. He is paid to come to a house, and the company invited are asked to choose a subject for him, some of the favourite zāts, or an incident in history, sacred or secular. Many of them, like the cyclic poets, repeat from memory, but there are others who invent their smooth verses as they go on chanting. They may perform in a house, or in a mandut

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538 specially run up for the occasion, or even in the open street. When a well-known sā-haw sayā is going to recite the Wethandaya or the Zanekka Zāts, or when he tells how the Lord Buddha left his father's palace to wear the yellow robe, or how he ascended to Tawadeintha, a dramatic performance is often completely deserted, and the actors have no option but to follow the populace and listen to the improvisatore themselves. One of the best of the Burmese dramatic writers, U Po Mya, was also particularly celebrated as a sā-haw sayā. He could repeat his own drama, the Wizaya Zāt, from end to end, but had also a particular facility in improvising.

181 His night's amusement over, the Burman goes home to sound sleep on his Danubyu mat or a coarser one if he has not got that, and rises to spend another day of the same kind. He cares nothing for the assertion that he leads an aimless, lazy life. He has enough to live upon, and the writings of all the philosophers say that wealth only brings new cares.

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there are gradations: the one mighty seat is divided into eight great holds, arranged one below the other, all with punishments so terrible that none can be said to exceed any other in hideousness. The names of all the eight great chambers, from Theinzo above to Awizi the nethermost hell, are given, but a detailed catalogue is unnecessary. Each great hell is surrounded by sixteen inferior places of torture called Ôtthad-daret. From west to east the flames stream through all the mighty space and pass through on the other side to a distance of a thousand yuzanas, and from east to west the same. From north to south, from Nadir to Pole, and Pole to Nadir, it is the same, and yet the torments of this heat are but a tithe of the gruesome tortures the sinner must suffer. The life of the Déwas in Tawadeintha is reckoned at sixteen million human years. That period is but as a day and night in Kālathôt, the second hell. Thirty such days and nights make a month, twelve months one year; and the wicked in the Kālathôt hell must pass one thousand such horrible years. The Nats in Tôt-thita live five hundred and seventy-six million years, which is but as one revolving sun and moon to the tenants of Yawruwa. Of such appalling days they must make up a tale of four thousand agonising years. The miserable wretches in Awizi work out the evil of their sins only in the space of an Andrakap, a period so vast that the mind cannot grasp it. As if these punishments were not sufficient to scare the weak and ignorant from sin, it has been revealed what other tortures await the damned. In one of the Ten Great Sacred Mystery Plays it is related how a pious prince was shown the horrors of hell. The terrible pictures of the sixth book of the *Æneid*, the awful imaginings of Dante's poem, are outdone by the flesh-creeping minuteness of the Nemi Zāt. The prince saw men devoured by five-headed dogs, by famished vultures, by loathsome crows, the flesh being renewed as fast as the foul creatures tore it away; he saw others crushed beneath the weight of vast white-hot mountains, stretched on fiery bars and cut up with burning knives and flaming saws, their hearts slowly scratched and pierced with fiery needles, flame entering at the mouth and licking up the vitals, fiends all about, hacking, hewing, stabbing,

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missionaries from Central India who introduced the teachings of the Lord Buddha into Burma. There was certainly an ancient Hindu colony there, and its inhabitants may have brought some notions of their architecture with them. But whether this be so or not, Burmans find source for pride in the admitted fact that "there is nothing in India to compare with the classical beauty of some of the smaller temples, or the stupendous architectural majesty of the Ânanda, or the Ta-pyi-nyu."

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The following song is taken from a very favourite play, *Sawpé Sawmé*, written by a Pegu dramatist and published in 1880, and gives an idea of the canticles sung at the dedication of pagodas and similar ceremonies. It is set to a very popular air, the Yôddaya Nan-thein Than, "the Siamese Palace Tune," but I have not ventured to try to reproduce the original complicated metre. The sikkè or magistrate in question was U Maung Galé, a younger brother of the late U On, long the only Burmese C.I.E., and once second judge of the Small Cause Court in Rangoon.

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THE GILDING OF THE SHWE MAW-DAW

Far-famed and bright, the Shwe Maw-daw
Is known where'er the Sacred Law
To toiling millions brings the peace,
Bids grief be still and turmoil cease.
Fair glory of Peguan land
Revered on earth's most distant strand,
Not more Dagôn's great golden pile
Hath honour in the Southern Isle,
Where'er beneath the zampu tree
The pious bend the suppliant knee,
Than thou the glorious lotus shrine
High temple of the hairs divine.
As leaps on high the funeral flame
Of some yahan of sainted name,
A beacon light to Neh'ban's rest
And haven sure to men distressed,
So skywards reared, thy shapely spire
Upsprings a pyramid of fire.

The hoar seer's words are now proved true,
Spoke ages since while yet all new

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ing two birds with one stone." Maung Tha Byaw said he was going to worship at the Shwe Dagôn pagoda. He gave a performance or two, and made several (Burmese) fortunes. Hence the saying—

Payā lè pu yin
Leip u lè tu yin.
You go and worship and dig turtles' eggs.
Turtles' eggs for prayer
Reward the pious player.

Maung Tha Byaw was not only a good singer, but himself wrote very good songs, and was particularly clever at coining in phrases the wisdom of many with the wit of one. No other "prince" has ever attained to his fame. Best known among the clowns was Shwe Lôt Gyi, who had the knack of making local jokes wherever he happened to be, and took the fullest advantage of the scope which the language afforded him in the way of punning. Just after the railway from Rangoon to Prome was opened, Shwe Lôt Gyi was performing in a piece where the prince and his servant, the clown, wander away into the forest and fall into a state of great destitution. The prince bewails his sad fate in a dolorous tedat (a tune appropriate to such lamentations), and finishes by asking what they are to do. The lubyet replied, "The English have just opened a railway here. You go and tres[illegible]ss on it, and I'll lay information against you and get the reward." The idea showed considerable acuteness in a man who had never seen a railway before.

Among the "princesses" many youths have been noted for the sweetness of their voice. The two best were Maung Tha Zan and, running him very close, Maung Mu, both of them, like Tha Byaw and the clown, Mandalay men. The accuracy with which they imitated the female voice was wonderful, the more so as every song abounds with trills and turns which would expose the least roughness. Neither in the recitative, the tremulous erotics, nor the doleful wailings of the maiden for her absent lover, would the stranger ever suspect the performer's sex.

The plays are performed during the day only in a few and exceptional cases, such as the arrival of a great man,

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person's body in evidence of having carried out their orders. Then when the next palace concert came on, the king—his late majesty—would grow tired of the ordinary vocalists and regret that the great improvisatore was gone. Whereupon Maung Tha Byaw would promptly come forth and sing his sweetest. He was killed in this way several times, but in the end died a natural death, about the same time as his contemporary Yindaw Ma Le.

The honours he received were quite on a par with European estimation of musical talent. He had a patent to carry a golden umbrella, and, as Thabinwun, had magisterial powers to punish those who offended him or refused to obey his edicts. Two lictors went before him to clear the way, a white cloth being tied round their fasces as a distinctive mark. When he performed in a play a low yaza mat, or royal fence, extended across the front of the stage, and at the ends were planted his golden hti and a banana-tree. The latter distinction was also granted to Maung Tha Zan and Maung Mu, singers only inferior to the Thabinwun himself.

If the tunes are not easily reduced to regular rules, the difficulty with the metres is not less. There exist, indeed, written laws ordaining the number of feet to the verse, but they are as lightly regarded as is consistent with their recognition at all. Much more precision is indeed expected in the old tunes than in those of modern date, but even with them song-writers of the present time allow themselves considerable freedom. The original linga are all very short. Thus the pyo has but four syllables; kabya, four; yatu, six and four; luta, four; yagan, six and four; ègyin, four, five, and six; hnawlôn, four and six; paikzôn, four; legyo, four; sagyin, four, five, and six; and so forth. In the thanzan, or new tunes, however, the compass of the lines often approaches the portentous length of some of Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*. Such modern tunes are the kayathan (so-called English), dobatthan, nabethan, nanthein yodaya (Siamese), and pyigyithan (Chinese). Such compositions as the lôngyin and ngogyin cannot be designated otherwise than as musical prose, with occasional fits of metre, prompted by their dolorous character. They are the

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threnodies and the laments of *divorcés*, unhappily all too common (in plays and song-books). Such, too, are the saungbasa, the ardent epistles of separated sweethearts.

The question of rhyme is even more puzzling. Some compositions not intended to be sung, such as notably the thanityathi bwè, songs about the twelve months of the year, giving an account of their characteristics, the pwès that take place in them, and so on, are written with regular final rhymes, while the other laws of prosody, shi'-lôn tabaik, kolôn tabaik, and so forth, are fairly strictly observed. But in the songs of the plays and such-like productions, rhyme runs absolute riot, so that it is quite common for every word in a line to rhyme with the corresponding word in the second verse of the couplet.

Thus in the kayāthan, translated below, there are abundance of lines like the following:—

Thuza lo lo
Muya po po.

Or—

Ma yo le hnan kyauk
A-po le tan lauk.

Or in the Tedat—

Ta ko dè pa
Ma so bè hma
A ngo thè hla.

Such rhymes occur in an abundance that makes them the most prominent characteristic of the verse, but it is impossible to reproduce them except in another monosyllabic language. English, of all others, offers the greatest difficulties to the translator.

I have done what is possible to reproduce the following kayāthan, "The Sound of the Trumpet,"[1] as nearly as possible in the varying metre of the original. Those who are best able to judge of the success of the attempt will be the most lenient in their criticism. I may mention that the tune was originally composed to the words of a song in honour of the accession of King Thibaw, but words on all manner of subjects have been written to it since.

[1] [see category 539, pp. 322-323 -- ANALYST]

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796 of worshippers from all the higher seats of the universe, earthly kings in royal dress, the white umbrella borne over their heads, and ministers and pages at hand with trailing robes and gorgeous peacock fans; nat-dêwas and their rulers in rainbow hues, with wings on arm and thigh; byammās from the thoughtful realms of the upper sky; a glittering throng, all uniting in praise to the Saviour of the World, the chant rising and falling on the night air as they slowly ascend. As a general thing it takes quite an hour to get up. There are many doxologies to be sung, and the performers, all laymen from the town, have paid many rupees for their dresses and want as many people to see their grandeur as possible. Technically, on the first night the image should go no farther than the Ugandaw hill, but, as already said, this half-way house very often does not exist at all, and even when it does there is usually no more than half an hour's halt, and then the procession goes on to Tawadeintha, the spire-covered platform on the summit. There the gay throng gather round the image in the attitude of adoration, and a man with a powerful voice stands behind it and declaims the sermon written down in the sacred books as having been preached on the occasion. The subject is filial piety. "I, the great Sramana, the mightiest of all beings, the teacher of ne'ban and the Law; I, the all-powerful, who by my preaching can lead my mother into the path of salvation and the final deliverance; I, who know all things and have beat down the passions under my feet; even I, with all this can but repay the debt due to one of the breasts that suckled me. What then can man offer in love and gratitude to the mother who nourished him at her breast?"

●[538] The sermon takes very much less time than the ascent. There is a Burmese proverb—

Sa nahtaung thaw
Taye pyaw.

When the pôngyi preaches
No harm the sleeper reaches;

that is to say, no great evil can befall you when you are assisting, in presence of body, if in no other way, at the

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A state envelope was a very curious affair. It was nothing else but two large elephant's tusks. Half-way up they were hollow, and on the mouth there was a heavy gold cover. The tusks were mounted in different parts with gold of no mean thickness. The letter of the lord of the Golden Throne was deposited inside, and borne to its destination with the flourish of trumpets and the braying of drums. The majesty of the Burmese king would have suffered if he had forwarded a communication to the Viceroy in a cover which cost anything under a couple of hundred pounds sterling. In similar fashion the reports of subordinate officials were written with steatite pencils on coarse black paper, and this was rolled up and put in a hollow joint of bamboo. The whole was then enveloped in cloth and sealed with a peacock seal. Communications of this kind were sometimes received by English officials on the British Burma frontier.

The following are a few proverbs:—

If you want to go fast, go the old road.

Wisdom guards life; no one can escape bad luck. The man gifted with wisdom is never left in peace.

Every bird is handsome compared with the vulture.

A mountain is climbed by degrees; property acquired by degrees; wisdom learnt by degrees.

Have regard for a whole family of rats, instead of for one cat.

The more you know, the more luck you have.

A short boat is hard to steer; a dwarf is quick in the temper.

If a cock ruffles up his feathers, it is easy to pluck him. If a man gets angry he is done for.

Constant cutting dulls the knife; constant talking dulls the wits.

A pot half full of water is hard to carry (on the head, of course; because the water sways from side to side); the less a man knows, the harder he is to argue with.

A cow that can give no milk will kick. An ignorant man is to be feared for his ignorance.

If there is much paddy (unhusked rice) in the bowl, it is hard to eat. If there is much talking it is hard to understand.

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
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Don't speak like a mountain, it is so easy to fall off.

Eat little, stomach slender; eat much, stomach-ache.

Beware of a man's shadow (*i.e.* his relations) and a bee's sting.

A coward tiger growls; a coward human howls.

The well-born are fair of speech; the low-born crooked.

A slave's son is a stupid son.

If a great man flatters you, be afraid.

A great man's sword is never blunt.

There are three chances in a nagā's stare; there is but one in a king's. (That is to say, you may escape from the dragon, but if the king is angry with you, speedy death is all you can expect.)

Kyet-go a-yo,
Lu-go a-myo.

Blood always tells; literally, you know a game-cock from his bones, a man from his family.

BURMESE MUSIC.

As for the classical cycle of keys, diagrams of which appeared both in U Ba Choe's article and U San Win's book 2, both U Ba Choe and U San Win quote authoritative verses from classical literature (*Natakaratanakosa* နဋ္ကရတနကောသ) but regret that not all the keys mentioned are in use in this decadent age. With due reverence for the classics I shall assign these verses like Ruskin's works on art and Pater's, to literature. It is becoming increasingly difficult to fit classical theory with the actual music. Whereas our classical literature came *en masse* from ancient India along with Buddhism many hundred years ago our music seems to have come from the east. Indeed one class of songs *yodaya* ယိုးဒယား came *en masse* from Siam less than two centuries ago. Music is the last thing that could have come with Buddhism. It seems to have developed quite independently of classical literature. In fact Burmese poetry *linga* လင်္ကာ *alankara*) is quite distinct from Burmese song (*thachin* သချင်း) and from both stands massive and remote the Buddhist literature of the *tripitaka* in the Pali language.

What seems to have happened is that while the elegant royalty and courtesans in the palace were delighting in the intricacies of Burmese versification with liberal infusion of both the Pali language and the Buddhist philosophy, music in its robust form was having its origins in animistic ritual (နတ်ပွဲ), in the village when somebody was giving alms and in the paddy-fields when the transplanting of the seedlings were in progress. For the former we have *Byaw*[1] (ဗျော) stick-struck drum songs, and for the latter we have *Bonshay* (ဘုံးဆေး) long-drum or *kauksaik* (ကောက်စိုက်) transplanting songs. *Kyoh* (ကြိုး) that most ancient class of Burmese songs also must have been in the beginning a labour chant for concerted action that germinated in ancient row boats, grew into a boat-song, and then developed for royal ears into its present high order of melodic and literary grandeur (*vide* the royal barge songs : ဆောင်ဆိုကြိုး when the barge makes port, ဆောင်ငင်ကြိုး when the barge is being towed out by rowers in open boats, ဆောင်တောကြိုး when the barge is underway [2]. The cadences of these still recall the rhythmic flash of wet oars in the sun. Thus Burmese music had as its sponsor the rustic festivals and the occupation of the hewers of wood and drawers of water, and not the Church as

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1. တေးဖားဇာတ်စဝင်ဆုံးဖြင့်ဆရာတော် 'A dancer's life (or dancing) begins with a tray of banana offerings (or *pwé* marked by a central fire-bowl stand of plantain trunk) in a *byaw* music party. Till 1698 A. D. when the 8th king of the Nyaungyan dynasty ဆဋ္ဌမင်း *Sané Min* came to the throne there existed only intoned poems ရွတ်ဆို ဝတ္ထုများ but no real Burmese music. တေးဝန်ဂုဏ်တော်း by U Nu. Sun Magazine, 1938.

2. U Ba Choe told me that this was not true. This class of songs used to be played as overtures in the playing of the Burmese harp, when the pupil first learnt to pluck simultaneously certain strings (ကြိုး *Kyoh*). For a full explanation of it see ဆောင်တေးဖွဲ့စည်းပုံ by U San Win.

13: Khin Zaw I-5 (no date) 1940 APl Burma
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BURMESE MUSIC.

Part III

Notes on Time.

There remains the question of Burmese musical time. Both Mr. Mariano and Paul Edmonds wrote with enthusiasm on the strictness with which Burmese musicians kept time. Very few among Burmans do not know how to keep the tiny bell (*si* ʃi) and clapper (*wah* oʊ̯ɪ) going correctly when music is playing. A foot or a hand of listeners and players alike may often be seen beating time. That may be partly because we as a race find it impossible to hear music with stolid immobility. Partly, however, it is because our language is not accentual but tonal.....

Rhythm in a language such as English is largely dependent upon differences of emphasis or accent upon the syllables in a word, and the words in a sentence. Differences of emphasis or accent do occur in Burmese, but not to the same extent; consequently emphasis or accent is not used very much, if at all, in the composition of Burmese verse.

Burmese verse depends rather upon the schematic arrangement of words with certain sounds recurring at fixed points. That is, Burmese verse has rhyme, but it has little or no accentual rhythm. On the other hand timing, especially such as depends upon the number of syllables pronounced in a given period and caesuras that mark the period are of greater importance in Burmese than in English. In Burmese singing the caesuras are even more important than the sets of syllables or words in each measure. *See*, the rests on the first beat of measures 1 to 8 (Example 11 Voice)[1].

The singer keeps time with a pair of tiny bells (*si* ʃi) and a small clapper (*wa* oʊ̯ɪ) in his hand. The 'clap' coincides with each of the rests mentioned till the final note of the section when it coincides with the tonic.

Simple duple or simple quadruple is the usual time. In the duple the bell (O) and the clapper (X) go alternately. In the quadruple there is a rest (—) on one or the other of the middle beats.

1. Had Mariano known the significance of these rests, which often marked the beginning of bars, he would have discovered six such rests in his own notation of Nanthein-yodaya in bars 13, 15, 23, 27, 33 and 35. Make two of his bars equal one, and halve the value of all his notes, and all becomes right. In barring, I often found that western musicians mistakenly listened for the accented note. Accented notes in Burmese music do not mark the beginnings of bars. They are merely emphasised or underlined notes. The caesuras are what should have been looked for. The Burmese equivalent of the strong beat at the beginning of bars is the beat, or rather the 'clap' of the clapper. *See* Example 11*a*.

Ceneral Attitudes of the Burmese toward Work.

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Rank and status in the Burmese Village is determined to a large extent on the basis of occupation - with the factor of wealth where applicable taking precedence over occupation. The highest rank is accorded to the Buddhist monks who exert the ultimate influence. Government officials including the township officers, the THU GYI (headman) and elders, and the schoolmaster occupy the second rank. The large land owners (of this group the rice-mill owners rate highest) rank next. Below these are the tradesmen - the paddy dealers, shop keepers and small holdings farmers who comprise the bulk of the population. Professional artisans such as carpenters, blacksmiths, gold and silver smiths occupy a lower position. However, it is common for the small holdings farmers to practice a secondary occupation such as pottery making.

[226]
[224]
[179]

Fishermen and hunters are looked down on by the rest of the community because they offend Buddhist precepts by taking life. In this class also are those who raise animals (cows, poultry, pigs) for food, smugglers and brewers. Fishermen, particularly those such as U Myaing who operate IN fisheries often become wealthy, but the stigma of the source of this wealth is remembered by the community.

● [538]

A story is told of a rich fisherman who came to cover the Shwe Dagon Pagoda in Rangoon with gold plate. Unfortunately, he had sinned so much by taking the lives of fish that he could not see the pagoda. In a rage he returned to his IN to cover its posts with the gold. Because of the stigma attached to fishing those who make their living in this way tend to live together in their own communities. Thus Pathae, U Myaing's village is primarily a fisherman's community.

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In the days of the Burmese kings, wealthy men and nobles (THAKIN) would assign people under their command to serve as pagoda slaves. Their names were engraved in stone and their descendants for all eternity assigned to this position. The duties were light - consisting mainly of sweeping the platforms and carrying for the images, but the social position was next to the lowest. It is believed that the flower vendors on the platform of the Rangoon

461 The key to 26 high positions lies in education in
555 the high schools and Universities. Family support is necessary for
873 this and the student is constantly aware of his obligation to succeed
602 for their benefit. "One tree can support a thousand birds" illustrate
[538] the dependency of the relatives on the successful individual.

555 In order to succeed one needs each of these three qualities:
777 KAMMA (fate or luck), NYAN (intelligence), and WIRIYA(industriousness
152 The failure of any one can cause the lack of success. Ordinarily,
602 however, KAMMA is blamed in cases of failure - and the other two credited for success. The concept of KAMMA includes merit and demerit compiled in all previous existences. Because of this convenient excuse the true causes of failure are seldom analysed by the individual and he does not have a sense of personal blame or shame. Also social condemnation does not fall heavily on the unsuccessful who has tried and failed. However, one should finish what he starts or not attempt it, "once you start climbing the pole you must reach the top". The individual may not achieve fame or fortune but he is expected to maintain his birth position. His relatives, who suffer shame if he does not, help him. A major contribution of the individual is an advantagous marriage within or above his occupational group.

[583]

556 What does one strive for, by work, in the Burmese society? Not
554 subsistence, for food is ordinarily cheap and easily attained in the
461 villages. Clothing, shelter and the other necessities of life are also not the objective. The subsistence pattern is simple and essentially homogeneous throughout the village.

554 The ordinary head of a household thinks of three major benefits
301 to be gained from wealth. The first and most immediate are jewels to
461 adorn the women of the family. The status of the family is reflected in public by the bangles, necklaces and earrings worn by the ladies. Diamonds are most prized and the size is important. However, most important is that each female be provided with "a set" of jewelry. The wife of the middle and upper status group particularly will prod the husband until he provides these necessities. The women's clothing and also the husbands and his son's must also be the finest they can afford.

461 The second urge for wealth arises out of the desire for old age
554 security. Hence gold coins are saved (hidden) against the day when
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21: Htin Aung E-5 (ca. 1930) 1937 AP1 Burma
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of Hindu traders from South India. After the introduction of Buddhism into South India by Asoka in 261 B.C., the traders began to bring Buddhist elements to Thaton. With the establishment in the third or fourth century after Christ of the Hindu kingdoms in Java and Sumatra, Thaton became an important trading centre, and with the rise of a great Buddhist centre at Conjeveram in Madras in the fifth century, the Talaings began to receive religious writings in Pali. From that time onwards, learning was definitely established in the kingdom, and, as a result, a Talaing literature came into being. Anawrahta was interested in Pali only, and therefore when he destroyed the city, he burnt all the manuscripts except those in Pali.[1]

The writing and learning that were thus introduced into Pagan took root at once. Prose and poetry as embodied in the language of the court and in songs had been in existence long before, though unwritten, and now the new learning turned them into written forms and began to develop them. Pali was studied everywhere, and in the newly-built temples with their crowded monastic life, works in Pali on religion, on Pali grammar and prosody, and on the legal code of Manu came to be produced.[2] Translations were also made, and soon Pagan became famous throughout India for its Pali scholarship. But

[1] The Burmese language belongs to the Tibeto-Burmese group, whereas the Talaing belongs to the Mon-Khmar group. In spite of Anawrahta's conquest and in spite of the fact that racially they were cousins, the Talaings became completely merged with the Burmese only in the eighteenth century. The probability of the Sanskrit drama reaching the Talaings is considered in chap. ii.

[2] G. E. Harvey, op. cit., pp. 59, 70.

The most famous for literary activity was the *Kyauku Ohmmin* temple. Though built perhaps even before Anawrahta, when a corrupted form of Buddhism was prevalent, it is still in an excellent condition (Harvey, p. 17).

The code of Manu was compiled originally in Sanskrit, during the period 200 B.C.–A.D. 200. Since that time it has been one of the chief sources of Hindu law (J. D. Mayne, *Hindu Law*). The Burmese received it in a Talaing-Pali version in which the sacerdotal element had been done away with. That explains why, although Manu is one of the chief sources also of Burmese Buddhist law, it has little in common with Hindu law. The existence of the code as the chief source of Talaing law (Harvey, op. cit., p. 111) raises again the question, how far were the Talaing writings under the influence of Sanskrit and its literature? We shall never know. When Anawrahta destroyed Talaing institutions and historical and literary works, he intended that all knowledge of the past greatness of the Talaings should pass into oblivion so as to smooth his way towards unifying Burma into one single State.

Pali has been, since 1044, the classical language of Burma.

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But

175 there never was any attempt to imitate the Pali language and its
538 literature in the vernacular, and Burma offers no parallel to the
198 controversy among English Renaissance scholars over the merits and demerits of the vernacular.

175 The period of Pagan's ascendancy marked the zenith of Burmese
538 greatness and civilization. It was a great centre of trade, and visitors from afar talked of the glory that was Pagan. Its supremacy was unquestioned by the whole of Burma, which had been united into a kingdom for the first time. It even demanded and probably obtained nominal allegiance from the greater part of Indo-China and the governors of the outlying provinces of the Chinese Empire. But the period of Pagan's ascendancy was not a great period in Burmese literature. Her capital looked radiant with its golden temples, her kings were learned and powerful, her troops marched in triumph, but Pagan never forgot that no material thing was real, and everything decayed and perished. Therefore, the scholars were interested only in religious themes, and religious themes seldom offer adequate scope for the development of a great literature. Although the clearness of diction and the artistry of the death-song of the royal tutor, Anantathuria, composed while awaiting execution in 1173, indicate that at least a few must have practised the use of the vernacular for non-religious purposes, the efforts of writers in the vernacular were chiefly directed towards the recording of inscriptions, which are still
[172] preserved in countless numbers in the pagodas of Pagan.[1] Many of these inscriptions contain good prose. The earlier inscriptions tend to be bombastic through sheer wealth of learning; the scholars of Pagan could not at once learn to control their use of the newly-acquired scholarship, just as the earlier writers of the Renaissance in England failed to restrict their use of learned words. However, after a few decades, the bombastic style gave place to a simpler and more
175 concise diction. In addition to the narrowness of scope offered by
172 religious themes, there was another reason which prevented Pagan,

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341 [1] The death-song is one of the greatest poems in the language and is the oldest non-religious piece of literature existing in Burma. A translation is given in G. E. Harvey, op. cit., p. 55, and another in Tin and Luce, *The Glass Palace Chronicle*, p. 139.

G. E. Harvey, op cit. (p. 70) describes the inscriptions as 'richly human and intensely devout', and he ranks (p. 38) some of Kyanzittha's (1084–1112) inscriptions as literature.

[172] *Epigraphia Birmanica*, a Government publication, gives the text of the more important inscriptions with translations.

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in spite of its greatness in other directions, from being a great period of Burmese literature. The love of beauty, which is the basis of all literature, had adequate satisfaction in the developed art of architecture. The poets of Pagan wrote their poems in bricks, instead of words, and their pagodas are still famous. When one stands on the shore of the Irrawaddy and looks towards the ruins of Pagan, one is reminded of the delicate beauty of an incomplete poem.[1]

Pagan fell in 1287 as the result of the Tartar onslaught during the time of Kubla Khan, the Scourge of God, and the country broke up into several little States, each attempting to control the others. For the next fifty years, political struggles went on in the capitals, but they failed to disturb the peace of smaller towns and villages. Many who had grown tired of the strife around the thrones flocked to the quiet of the village monasteries in order to find peace. Religion went on undiminished, but the learning connected with it decayed, for the royal patronage was lacking. Architecture also decayed because there was no royal support and because the country had become poor. Men turned to literature for its own sake, and during this period Burmese prose and poetry assumed definite forms with fully developed diction, rhythm, rhyme and style.[2]

[1] Many temples and pagodas of the Pagan period are in an excellent state of preservation and are still in use as places of worship. Scott O'Conner's *Mandalay and Other Cities* contains fine illustrations of the more famous of these religious buildings.

The achievement of the Pagan kings, the 'Temple Builders', is summed up by Harvey thus: 'The legacy of their fleeting sway has enriched posterity for ever. It was they who made the sun-scorched wilderness, the solitary plain of Myingyan, to blossom forth into the architectural magnificence of Pagan. If they produced no nation-builder like Simon de Montfort, no lawgiver like Edward I, they unified Burma for more than two centuries, and that in itself was an achievement. But their role was æsthetic and religious rather than political. To them the world owes in great measure the preservation of Theravada Buddhism, one of the purest faiths mankind has ever known. Brahminism had strangled it in the land of its birth; in Ceylon its existence was threatened again and again; east of Burma it was not yet free from priestly corruptions; but the kings of Burma never wavered, and at Pagan the stricken faith found a city of refuge. Vainglorious tyrants built themselves lasting sepulchres, but none of these men has a tomb. . . . These men's magnificence went to glorify their religion, not to deck the tent wherein they camped during this transitory life.'—*History of Burma*, p. 70.

[2] Ibid., p. 103. Since that time, prose and poetry show continuous development. The full history of Burmese literature still remains unwritten. However, the *Anthology of Burmese Literature*, a Government publication,

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Though prose and poetry had thus assumed definite forms by about the fourteenth, or early fifteenth century, the drama was unknown until very much later. The first real Burmese drama appeared, though it had its origins some decades earlier, only towards the close of the eighteenth century, and during the next hundred years it developed and then decayed. Burmese dramatic literature developed in a historical sequence and in a way essentially similar to that of the Elizabethan drama. But why the similarity? Is it accident? Is it because of the similarity in the geographical isolation of the two countries? Or, is there a definite way in which all dramas have to develop in natural sequence?

2. Sources of Information

The history of Burmese drama can be divided into six stages. First, there is the age of the *Nibbathkhin*, comparable to the English miracle play, ending about 1752. Second, we have, from 1752 to 1819, the period of the interlude[1] (comparable to the English morality and interlude) and the court drama. Third, we have the period of the dramatist, U Kyin U, 1819 to 1853. Fourth, we have the period of the poet, U Pon Nya, 1853 to 1878. Fifth, there is the period of decadence, 1878 to 1886. Sixth, we have the time from 1886 to the present day. As dates are in many cases uncertain in determining the periods I am taking the reigns of various kings. As the drama depended much on the court and the victories and defeats of the king, perhaps I am justified in so doing. In any case, if a date is wrong, it is wrong by not more than two or three years.

The time before 1752 is the most difficult period as far as research is concerned. The centuries that followed the fall of Pagan—the time of internal wars, 1287 to 1531—saw the rise of a vernacular literature, which is found existing in the Empire of 1531 to 1752.[2]

arranges its extracts in more or less chronological order, and therefore gives a good idea of the development. The subject is outside the scope of this work but I mention it to show how late the first appearance of Burmese drama was as compared with other branches of Burmese literature.

[1] The term 'interlude' is explained in chap. i.

[2] Perhaps it will not be out of place to give a short summary of the history. The various small States into which the country broke up after 1287 gave place, after some fifty years of incessant strife, to Ava, the kingdom of the Burmese, and Pegu, that of the Talaings. The small principality of Toungoo under Ava rebelled and conquered the whole of Burma in 1531.

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The rise of the *Nibhatkhin* was the result of the rise of the vernacular literature, for then learning had reached the people. But we do not quite know at what time the *Nibhatkhin* first came into being. According to tradition, the custom of holding religious processions and pageants had existed long before 1752, about which time the interlude and the *Hawsa* (a recitation of a story in verse) came into being, but how long before nobody can tell. However, as it must have taken some time for the vernacular literature to take root, I adopt tentatively 1531 to 1752 as the period of the *Nibhatkhin*.

For the story of the development of the *Nibhatkhin*, I am dependent on tradition alone. The tradition of its development from the pageant is quite logical. Moreover, it is general and not confined to a particular district. I have discussed it with various Burmese scholars and I have made inquiries in far-away villages, and always I find the same tradition. In some out-of-the-way villages, which the influences that affected the drama at the capital had failed to reach, the development of the *Nibhatkhin* from the pageant was within living memory. Until recently, in such villages, one could even see the *Nibhatkhin* in its various stages of development. One village would be presenting a procession, another a pageant, a third would be staging a fully developed *Nibhatkhin*; in all the villages, their particular practice had been the custom for many years, further development having been checked by the introduction of the drama in its more mature stages by touring troupes of professional actors, and it had continued to exist side by side with the performances of strolling players, just as some miracle plays continued to be presented in certain places in England during the heyday of the Elizabethan

Under Bayinnaung (1551–81) the whole of Indo-China, the outlying provinces of China, and Manipur owed allegiance to the Burmese king. After his death, the Empire decayed until the ruler of Pegu, who had become independent, defeated the Burmese, and turned Burma into a Talaing Empire in 1752. The Empire was short-lived, for in the same year Alaungpaya rebelled, founded the last Burmese dynasty, and 'Burmanised' the Talaings by force. He and his successors turned Burma into one united kingdom, which with the Shan States, Siam, Manipur, and Assam, formed the Burmese Empire. The period 1752–1819 was the Age of Triumph, a fuller account of which is given in chap. ii.

The Burmese lost Assam, Manipur, and the native provinces of Arakan and Tenasserim to the British in 1824. The rest of Lower Burma fell into British hands in 1852. On 1 January 1886 the whole country was proclaimed a province of the Indian Empire.

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accounts regarding it. Apart from the notes gathered by my father, I base my information on the accounts given to me orally by my grandmother and grand-aunts who actually saw the interludes performed.

In support of the oral tradition regarding the nature of the interlude, there are some echoes of it in the plays of U Kyin U. He developed the interlude into a proper play, but the change was not a sudden one, and in his plays we find echoes of the interlude in its various stages. His plays are considered in detail in another chapter. There are also contemporary references to the interlude. Even from an English pen we have an account. Colonel Yule in 1855 saw an entertainment midway between the interlude and the developed plays of U Kyin U.[1]

The period of the court plays offers an easier task for research. The *Rama* play from Siam is preserved, with adaptations, it is true, but with notes on the original when a change was made in the preserved version.[2] The other Siamese play of *Eenaung* has come down to us. The poem *Rama-yagan* which Burmanized the *Rama* story has also come down. Accounts of the performances of the court plays and the recitation of the poem at court are many and well known. From the time when they were first composed down to the present day, the works of these court poets and dramatists have been studied and read. The influence of these works on the interlude is suggested, not only by the 'internal evidence' in U Kyin U's plays, but also by the editorial prefaces to the works in their various editions.

Though only three plays of U Kyin U exist at the present day as far as is known, the period is quite easy of research, because references and notes regarding him occur in various records of the court and the nobility, and because the Burma Research Society has published new editions of two of his plays; and though the prefaces to them are short and no attempt is made to make a complete study, suggestions for further study and research are made by the editors.

The period of U Pon Nya offers the easiest task, as compared with other periods, so far as research is concerned. All his plays are

[1] H. Yule, *A Narrative of the Mission sent by the Governor-General of India to the Court of Ava in 1855*. His description of the dramatic entertainment he saw is considered again in the next chapter in connexion with Sir William Ridgeway's theory of the development of the Burmese drama.

[2] There is a copy of the *Rama* play in the British Museum. It is wrongly catalogued as by U Ku, who was only the editor. All these plays and the poem have been printed again and again, and are easily obtainable in Burma.

So the worship of the nats lived on, and with the advance of
795 civilization the spirit dances became elaborate, for though the belief
535 was primitive, the people were no longer so. The dances benefited from the developments that had taken place in Burmese music which, as we have seen, flourished under the patronage of the Pagan kings. New spirits were added, and they were usually those of heroic princes. The dancers were now many, for the mediums turned themselves into dancing and music mistresses. The chief medium of each spirit dressed herself in the special dress of the spirit, but the junior mediums, who were equivalent to the chorus of án English revue, were in the dress of Burmese princesses. It is interesting to note the
[292] origin of this dress. The mediums realized the necessity of dressing
[565] themselves in fine raiment, but as everybody wore clothes of bright colours, the only solution of the problem was to don the dress of the court and official class, which the commoners were forbidden to
[536] wear by law, except during feasts and dances. When drama proper came into being, the hero and the heroine dressed themselves in the court dress, even when they were representing common characters.

3. Miracles and Interludes

175 After the fall of the kingdom of Pagan in A.D. 1257, Burma was
369 the scene of fierce civil wars, but the trouble was mainly in the
726 capitals; in the villages and small towns life went on in its joyous
779 way. Religion continued to spread in spite of the fact that the throne
538 of Pagan was no longer in existence to support it. Learning began to reach the remotest parts of the country, carried far and near by monks. To escape from the aimless strife of the civil wars, men turned towards literature. Money was lacking to compose poems in brick as had been done at Pagan, and men now expressed their love for the religion and their love for the beautiful in writing. The new literature further educated the people and made even stronger the already strong religious fervour. As a result, at village feasts and on days of public rejoicing, the people turned towards their religion for amusement and entertainment. So pageants depicting scenes from the life of the Buddha and from his Birth Stories came into being.

796 Pageants were given on ordinary carts that were in use for all
541 kinds of transport and which are still in use in backward parts of the
493 country at the present day. Each cart carried a group of (amateur) actors standing still and representing a set scene. Originally, no doubt, there were only a few carts representing scenes from different stories. Later, a pageant came to consist of many carts and many

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subject of the English morality plays. Again and again we find writers writing and actors saying in the prologue or epilogue that a play represents but life in its various stages; as man begins in laughter and ends in misery and death, a play begins with the happiness of the hero and heroine, and then goes on to tell of their misery and parting. To the conservative Burmese Buddhist, professional acting was a sin, and to get over the difficulty, the idea came into being that the play was only a species of preaching the religion. The existence of that idea perhaps supports my theory that there actually were plays dealing with morals which would favour the rise of such an idea. Perhaps the strongest evidence that there was a morality stage in the history of the development of Burmese drama is the existence of a popular play which has never been printed, but which is still sometimes acted. The play has no title. A rich miser marries a young wife and soon dies. The wife at once remarries. The miser now in Hell sues the wife and the new husband before the court of the governor of Hell, for the restitution of the property he had so patiently gathered and hoarded. There is a trial, and after hearing the arguments of both sides, the judge decides in favour of the young couple. The play ends with the judge moralizing on the emptiness and transitory nature of human riches. The play is quite crude and short, so that when presented today the actors have to lengthen the play to make it last the night. There is very little action, and the king of later dramas is absent. The names of the characters are general and abstract; Mister Miserly, Mistress Wife, Master New Husband, and Death (who takes the old husband to Hell).

The interlude was extremely popular, and at the court, at the houses of officials (the Burmese had no hereditary nobility, and the officials were the nobles) and at public feasts and festivals the interlude was presented. The importance of the interlude in the development of Burmese drama is great, but the importance of the professional actors who first presented the interlude in the development of the acting profession and stage conventions is even greater. The fact that the original members of the profession were outside the social pale caused all actors and actresses to be looked down upon; that fact explains why in an essentially democratic society it was said with contempt that 'beggars and actors, they are the eaters of food thrown away as waste'.[1]

[1] The stage conventions and the acting profession are described in detail in chap. vii.

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536* 178 773 538 While the interlude was developing, the drama, another form of entertainment, was also becoming rapidly popular. The *Hawsa* or the dramatic reading and recital of a Birth Story in verse was becoming the fashion. The *Hawsa* was in dialogue form, and the reciter changed his voice and used dramatic gestures. As I have said, one cannot be certain of many things regarding the interlude, but it seems exceedingly probable that the early interludes were not literary. The actors were unlettered, unpractised in verse composition and only knew the *Jataka* Birth Stories from translations. The *Hawsa*, on the other hand, was a literary work. It was in verse. The reciter was an accomplished verse-writer if not a poet, and when reciting pieces he himself had not written, he invariably put in additions and modifications. He knew Pali and therefore could read the *Jatakas* in the original. Whilst the actor was looked upon as nothing more than a beggar, the reciter was greatly respected. This will perhaps explain why the *Hawsa*, and not the interlude, has come down to us in writing.[1] With all the differences, however, the reciter and the actor were akin to each other, and both contributed much to the rise of the developed play, just as both the dramatic recitations of the epic *Ramayana*, and the open-air performances of its scenes contributed much to the rise of the developed Sanskrit play in India.

536* There is no special term for that entertainment which I have called the interlude. The name *Pya-zat*, which means a play, is vaguely applied to it in common with developed plays, but it is certain that the term came into use only about the time of U Kyin U to denote developed plays. Therefore, I have ventured to name it the interlude, partly because of its similarity to the English interlude, but mainly because it was given in the middle of, or at least subsidiary to, the main entertainment of dancing.

[175] The interlude and the *Hawsa* were at the height of their popularity in 1767 when Siam was conquered. The results of the conquest are considered in Chapter II.

4. Sir William Ridgeway's Theory of the Origins and Development of Burmese Drama

536* 114 Sir William Ridgeway, in *The Dramas and Dramatic Dances of Non-European Races*, considers that the dramas and dramatic dances of those races support his theory regarding Greek tragedy, that it arose

[1] Some specimens of the *Hawsa* are given in the *Anthology of Burmese Literature*.

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tunes played by the orchestra. The chorus was first introduced for two reasons: the audience liked a dance, and the actors did not forget that their original calling was that of mediums.

2. According to Ridgeway, the second stage of the drama was reached when the 'true dramatic element borrowed from the Indian historical plays of Rama, presented by the puppet players' had entered Burmese drama. The weak points in this theory will be apparent when the further history of the drama is considered in later chapters. The 'true dramatic element' was already in the *Nibbathkhin*, or at least in the interlude; the Indian *Ramayana* coming by way of Siam did influence Burmese drama, but this was possible only because there was already a native drama to absorb this foreign influence. Nor were the *Rama* plays presented at first by puppet players. When the translations and adaptations of the Siamese *Ramayana* were being first presented at court, puppet plays were unknown. Ridgeway puts forward some opinions regarding the Burmese puppet show also, but they will be considered in Chapter VII.

3. According to Ridgeway, the third stage of Burmese drama was reached when there appeared plays 'based on the Indian models, but finding their themes in the national history and mythology, intermixed with Buddhistic elements, and performed by puppets and living actors.' It is true that after the introduction of the Siamese *Rama* play to the Burmese court, plays of the type described appeared, but the plays were by no means modelled on the *Rama* play. The Siamese play gave rise to a native court drama which influenced the interlude and prepared the way for the first great Burmese dramatist, U Kyin U. And the 'Buddhistic elements' which entered the drama have a history of their own. All these points are considered in later chapters.

On the nature and achievements of Burmese drama, Ridgeway says: 'The Burmese drama has not remained crystallized as a piece of religious ritual. On the contrary, it has made distinct steps towards the true drama which Thepis in Greece and the forerunners of Marlowe and Shakespeare in England detached from the sacred shrines and lifted into a distinct artistic form. Yet it has not advanced beyond the lyrical stage, consisting of dancing, singing and instruments of music, the undulation of the vocal expression being much more subtle and intense than the expression of features, whilst gesture is restricted to the conventional gestures of the dance. The usual scene is the palace, its inmates the characters, and the drama

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CHAPTER II

THE RISE OF A COURT DRAMA IN BURMA

1. The *Ramayana* of Valmiki

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Before considering the influence of the Siamese *Rama* play on Burmese drama, perhaps it will not be out of place to attempt to give an account of the great Indian epic, the *Ramayana*, in which the Siamese play had its sources.

The *Ramayana* is one of the two Hindu epics, the other being the *Mahabharata*. The *Ramayana* as a completed poem is the older of the two, though the kernel of the *Mahabharata* may have been older. Very probably the legend of Rama existed long before Valmiki composed the poem, to which later poets made large additions; the original composition and the main additions belong to the period 400 B.C. The epic contains two separate stories, the court intrigues of Ayodhya and the exile of Rama to the forest; the capture of Sita by Ravana and the resulting war with the demon king. The first story was probably in existence as a Buddhist Birth Story—the *Dasaratha Jataka*—when the poem came into being.[1]

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The poem is divided into seven books. The first book in its present shape, which reveals additions to the original, tells of the manner in which the poem came to be composed by Valmiki, of the Hindu gods, the divine origin of the prince Rama, and his winning of Sita as bride by bending a strong bow which none other could bend. In the second book we read that Rama was going to be consecrated heir, but the junior queen, Kaikeyi, the mother of Bharata, reminded the king that he had promised two boons to her for nursing him when he was lying ill. She demanded firstly the choice of her own son, Bharata, as heir, and secondly the exile of Rama. The doting king was in great distress and tried to argue with the queen, but it was in vain, and the promise had to be kept. Rama acquiesced, and

[1] Dr A. B. Keith has kindly pointed out to me that many scholars doubt whether the *Dasaratha Jataka* could be so old, and, therefore, the general opinion would seem to regard it as being later than the poem.

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● 538 was ordered to the forest as an exile. His consort, Sita, and his brother, Lakshmana, begged to accompany him into exile. So the three left the city, followed by a wailing crowd who wanted to share the exile, but they succeeded in getting away from the people and reached the forest. The king died soon after of a broken heart, and Bharata followed Rama to the forest, refusing to take the throne as long as the rightful heir was living. Rama, however, had promised his father to live fourteen years in exile, and therefore he refused to take the throne. Bharata asked for a symbol with which to rule in his name, and Rama gave his shoes, which Bharata, on his return to the city, faithfully put on the throne, and he ruled in Rama's name. The third book deals with the two princes and the princess who entered a thicker part of the forest where demons dwelt. The demons were troubling the hermits who performed their austerities in the forest. Now the king of the demons, Ravana, had divine powers, which had been granted to him by Brahma, the chief god, for services rendered, but as he had been abusing the divine gift, Rama's chief mission was to destroy the demon king. It happened that the demon's sister, Surpanakha, fell in love with Rama. He refused her advances and suggested that she should approach Lakshmana, the younger brother, as he was unmarried. The demon princess then tried to attract the brother, but he suggested that she should ask Rama to take her as his second queen. The sole result of these efforts and her attack on Sita was the cutting-off of the demon princess's nose by the younger brother, who was impulsive by nature. The angry princess went back to her brother, the demon king who, however, was not eager to fight Rama and risk his life and throne. The sister succeeded in winning him over only when she mentioned the loveliness of Sita. The demon king sent his forces under the great warrior, Khara, who was worthy to be Rama's opponent. There was a great and bloody fight, from which Rama emerged victorious. The demon king's sister then thought of a plan to which the king agreed. The latter disguised himself as a hermit, and his follower, Maricha, assumed the form of a golden deer and passed by the place where Rama and his companions dwelt. Sita wanted the deer, and Rama was pressed to give chase to it. Rama left, charging his brother with the careful guardianship of Sita. The deer was shot, but as he lay dying he imitated Rama's voice and shouted: 'Lakshmana, help!' Sita heard the words and taunted Lakshmana until he went to his brother's help, full of evil forebodings. In his absence, the demon king approached the

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place in the guise of a hermit, and the princess, not suspecting him, invited him to come in. The hermit began to praise her beauty, and then showed his true form. Sita refused his advances, but was put forcibly on the demon's flying chariot and driven away. The King of the Vultures, friend of Rama, gave chase, but after a fierce battle, he was slain by the demon. Rama and his brother soon discovered their loss and went in search of Sita. They met another demon, and there resulted another battle. The demon was slain, but his spirit advised Rama to seek the help of the monkey king, Sugriva. The fourth book tells how the two brothers met Sugriva, who informed them that he had been deprived of his throne by his brother, the usurping Bali, who had also taken his wife. Rama, as Sugriva's ally, joined in a battle for the throne in which the usurper was killed. The queen bewailed the death of her hero, but she soon took her first husband back again, without giving much thought to the memory of Bali. The fifth book tells us how Hanuman, the wise minister of Sugriva, went as a spy to the demon kingdom and succeeded in learning Sita's whereabouts. The sixth book tells of the great battle between Rama with his monkey allies and the demons. Their king was slain by Rama, and Sita was then restored to him. Rama, however, behaved in a heartless manner. He told her that her long captivity in the kingdom of the demon had made her impure; he had waged the war merely to vindicate his honour and not because he wanted her back. Now Sita had always refused the advances of the demon king, who had been afraid to win her by force. But Rama thought otherwise, and Sita was in sore distress. Her innocence and purity had never been in any way tarnished, and the fact was now proved by a divine miracle—her successful emergence from an ordeal by fire. So Rama was satisfied, and he returned with Sita to his own capital where they were crowned. The seventh book, very probably an addition, tells of the further adventures of Sita. Her innocence was doubted, notwithstanding the divine miracle, by most of her people, who believed her to have been the consort of the demon king. They blamed Rama for taking her back. As a result of this agitation, Sita was again exiled for some years. During her exile her twin sons were born. At last, again by divine miracle and help, her purity was proved to the satisfaction of the people. They made ready to welcome her back to her city, but she was received into the bosom of the earth goddess.

On this great national epic were founded many plays. For

On this great national epic were founded many plays. For
538 example, the thirteen Trivandrum plays commonly attributed to the
536* authorship of Bhasa contain two based on the *Ramayana*. The date of the plays is generally accepted as the second or third century after Christ.

2. The Siamese Court Play of *Rama*

177 From about the third century after Christ, the great Hindu expan-
175 sion overseas began in earnest, and as a result many Hindu kingdoms
101 were founded in Indo-China, Malaya, Java, and the surrounding regions. Before that time, very probably there was at least some intercourse between India and those regions, and may be Buddhism was not unknown in the regions mentioned. But by the third century A.D. Buddhism had completely disappeared in them, except for very faint traces remaining in Burma. In India itself, Buddhism was on the wane and Brahmanism was in the ascendant. Therefore when the merchants of Northern India spread a new culture in Indo-China and
[538] the surrounding regions, the culture was distinctly Hindu. The Indians took with them their religious epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. Though both came to be very well known, the former was perhaps the more popular, probably because it was more finished artistically. Sanskrit plays were also no doubt introduced. The Hindu influence reached its height about the fourth and fifth centuries—in the third century Bhasa was composing his plays, and Kalidasa, the greatest of Hindu-Sanskrit dramatists lived about the year 400. Hindu poems and romances must also have been brought into the newly-founded kingdoms and trading centres.

177 The intensity of the new influence varied in the regions. Burma
101 was nearest and directly on the route from India. But probably
174 there was already a strong native civilization, and Hindu culture failed to take root. Along the coast, however, at Thaton, there was quite a strong outpost of Hindu culture, but even there the Hindu influence was quite negligible compared with regions farther east. In Cambodia the new culture was especially favoured, and in Java, Sumatra and the Malay peninsula, it took deep root. In Siam, however, the intensity was much less. In the narrow circle of the court the Hindu influence was strong, but the people were quite untouched by it. The chief reason was very probably the continuous, peaceful invasion by people from the north, the Shans, or at least the forefathers of the modern Shans. According to some scholars, they were Buddhists, which is not unlikely as Buddhism, in a modified form,

[i.e., the Romayana -- ANALYST]

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was prevailing in China and Tibet by about the third century A.D. In any case, the ever-increasing population, alien to Hindu culture, must have acted against the intensity of the Hindu influence. Moreover, Siam was one of the earliest converts from Hinduism to Buddhism which, especially after the great Buddhist missionary, Buddhagosa, who lived in the fifth century, was ousting Brahmanism in Indo-China. At the Siamese court, however, the Hindu tradition was very strong, and remained so even when the king and his courtiers had become Buddhists.

In Siam, as in the neighbouring regions, learning did not reach the people for a long time even though it flourished at the court. The Hindu tradition was not strong enough to prevent the courtiers from creating a native literature. Buddhism prevented the courtiers from looking upon the Hindu learning with a conservatism that would not have allowed imitations. In Cambodia and elsewhere native ideas could never shake off the dominance of Hindu culture, and no native literature could come into being until quite modern times. Moreover, the very fact that the Hindu tradition was strong prevented the survival of Sanskrit literature in those regions, for once the tradition was broken, only chaos resulted. To make it clear, I will take the Java shadow-play. Sanskrit dramatic representation gave rise to the Java shadow-play. Therefore, one would expect Java to preserve a Hindu dramatic literature to herself and to the world. But it failed to do so. The shadow-play of Java is interesting as a special kind of dramatic performance, and not as dramatic literature. The stories that are presented on the shadow-stage in Java are taken mostly from the Hindu epics, but they have very little dramatic structure. Yet originally they must have been developed Sanskrit plays. Of course, to begin with, the Sanskrit shadow-plays themselves were slight in structure, but by no means so crude as the Javanese ones. The Hindu tradition was so strong that once it was destroyed, not only did the Hindu drama in Java decay and disappear, but a native drama in a developed form failed to appear. Stories from Hindu sources as well as stories from native history and mythology are still shown on the Java shadow-stage, but the plays are all formless and crude. In Cambodia, where the Hindu tradition was indeed very strong and lasted much longer, some remnants of the developed Sanskrit drama are preserved, but the tradition was so strong that no native element could enter it. There, up to the present day, a State theatre, with a special minister

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of State, presents the *Ramayana*, and less frequently that play which the Burmese calls the *Eenaung*.[1] Both are remnants of Sanskrit plays no doubt introduced by the early Hindu kings. Throughout the centuries, the two plays have been regularly presented with the full patronage of the king and all the splendour at his command. It is almost a ritual. During the intervening centuries, no fresh incentive had come from India, and no new element, no native element, was allowed to enter it; the result was that the Cambodian *Ramayana* soon lost its freshness. Cambodia, therefore, not only has no native drama; it also failed to preserve for posterity good examples of Sanskrit dramatic literature.

To return to Siam. Even the courtiers did not look upon the Hindu tradition with too much awe and conservatism. They recognized and retained the vital elements of Hindu culture as far as possible so as not to clash with native and Buddhistic elements. The results of such special circumstances are best seen in Siamese literature. The court encouraged and the courtiers produced romances based on and in imitation of Sanskrit-Hindu romances. Native ideas, native tales, and native mythology were introduced into works modelled on Hindu literary works. In drama, the Siamese did not produce native plays, and they retained the *Ramayana* as a play. But they introduced new ideas and kept alive the old. In dramatic literature, as in all other matters, the Siamese had to reject all that was contrary to Buddhism, and some were retained only after much alteration to suit new needs. A consideration of the Siamese play of *Rama* shows clearly the above facts.

The epic tradition was very strong in India and it prevented Sanskrit drama from rising to still greater heights. In the new Hindu regions of Indo-China and the Malay Archipelago epic tradition was equally strong, if not stronger. In India the Sanskrit drama was shackled by the epic tradition; in the new regions the drama was very probably entirely subordinated to the epic. The dramatic performances in Cambodia, in Siam, in Java, before modern influences came in, were based mostly on the *Mahabharata* or the *Ramayana*. Perhaps it is legitimate to assume that the Sanskrit plays introduced into the new Hindu kingdoms were mostly those based on the epics: mostly, but not all. For the *Eenaung*, which is very probably from Hindu-Sanskrit sources, tells a story unconnected with the two epics.

[1] This is explained in the next section.

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The *Ramayana* was probably the more popular; it is likely then that plays based on that epic were more numerous. The Siamese *Rama* play seems to prove the above facts.

The Siamese *Rama* play is based on the epic. But much had to be altered, much had to be rejected. Rama was taken to be a Future-Buddha; this alteration suggested itself, no doubt, by the existence of the Birth Story, the *Dasaratha Jataka* which must have been known in Siam after Buddhism had taken root (and which, as already stated, probably existed before the epic). Rama was destined to be a Buddha soon, otherwise he was an ordinary mortal; he was of no divine birth, and all the supernatural help he had was his magic bow. In the original, the supernatural was connected with the Hindu religion and Hindu gods. The Siamese had to reject all those; the supernatural in the Siamese play became just simple magic or help by the Siamese equivalent of the Burmese *nats* who are supposed to help or hinder human beings just as ordinary mortals help or hinder each other; the Hindu gods of the epic were religious, whereas the Siamese supernatural beings in their play were quite independent of religion in their acts and behaviour. In the Hindu epic, the gods were behind the scenes, planning the destiny of mortals, but such a conception was entirely rejected by the Siamese. Therefore, whereas the Hindu *Ramayana* was a religious epic, the Siamese play became merely a dramatized *Jataka* Birth Story.

The Siamese play of *Rama*, dramatizing the epic, was influenced also by the Sanskrit plays themselves founded on the epic. Whether non-Rama Sanskrit plays had any direct influence is uncertain; it would be natural to suppose that they might have had some influence, but it was probably very slight. The play as a whole lacks unity and dramatic structure, but taken separately, each scene is quite dramatic. That dramatic element was doubtless borrowed from the finished Sanskrit plays. The character of the villain, the demon king, was borrowed direct from the Sanskrit *Rama* plays. In the epic, he was a worthy rival of the hero in many ways, but in the Siamese play he became merely a boastful villain, who could never rival the hero. The summing up of the character of the demon king in the plays of the great Sanskrit dramatist, Bhasa, by Dr Keith—that he 'was nothing more than a *miles gloriosus* if not comic'—can be applied to the Siamese demon. The Sanskrit drama aimed at producing sentiment, but it would not allow a division of sentiment. As Dr Keith says: 'It would not allow the enemy of the hero to rival him

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101 536* 539 in any degree; nothing is more striking than the failure to realize the possibility of a great dramatic creation presented by the character of Ravana as the rival of Rama for Sita's love. Ravana varies in the hands of the dramatists, but all tend to reduce him to the status of a boastful and rather stupid villain, who is inferior at every point to his rival.' Therefore, it can be safely assumed that the Siamese Ravana stepped straight out of the Sanskrit drama.'

However, the interest was more in the epic than in the plays founded on the epic. The Siamese aimed at presenting the epic scene by scene. In the Sanskrit plays, the whole story was not given, only some scenes being taken, as there were limits to the length of a Sanskrit play. A knowledge of the story was assumed in the audience. As a result, in the Sanskrit plays, we have description rather than action. But it was different with the Siamese. The audience as a whole, composed not only of courtiers, but also of common people who were often admitted to a State or palace performance, did not know the story so well as a Hindu audience. Therefore, action rather than description was given in the presentation of the story. The Siamese play came to have many elements comparable to those existing in the Indian open-air performance of the epic, the *Rama Lila*, where the whole epic is presented scene by scene (the *Rama Lila*, though still performed at the present day in India, is very ancient). But the Siamese play is much more developed drama, for there is good dramatic construction in the individual scenes. The Siamese had also to modify the story because they wanted to make the action presentable on the stage. Therefore, they rejected the fight with the vulture king, and they made Ravana much more like an ordinary human being. The demon king was allowed to have ten heads (they could be represented by a series of masks on the head); but he was no longer a very tall giant. All the demons were turned into ordinary mortals as far as stature was concerned. In a *Rama Lila* performance, the battle between the demons and Rama is presented by means of tall, grotesque figures made of wood and paper. In the Siamese performance, as in the Sanskrit plays, living actors took the parts of the demons. The *Rama Lila* is primitive and crude; the Siamese play, thanks to the influence of the Sanskrit drama and native genius, became quite developed artistically. Though following the epic, the Siamese play, unlike the *Rama Lila*, was not bound to follow it blindly.

These points, and also some others, will perhaps be made clearer

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by a consideration of the story of the Sinmoee play. It begins with Rama's father holding court, and information regarding the sons of the king, etc. is given by way of introduction. Then the scene shifts to Sita's court where Rama wins her after beating all other princely suitors by his strength and prowess with the bow. The princess is brought to Rama's palace, and the king calls his ministers and announces his intention of appointing Rama as heir. The junior queen enters and asks for the fulfilment of a boon promised to her by the king when she nursed him back to health. She now asks for the appointment of her own son, Bharata, as heir. The king tries to protest, but the queen remains stubborn. Rama comes and begs his father to keep the promise. So the younger son is appointed. The king, however, suggests to Rama that he should go into exile, pointing out the danger to the State and to Rama himself if he remains in the country. Rama agrees to leave the kingdom for fourteen years, and begs his father to look after Sita, who, however, refuses to stay behind. Lakshmana, the younger brother of Rama, begs leave to accompany his brother. Rama argues with Sita and his brother to make them stay behind, but it is in vain. So the three bid farewell to the king, and amidst the wailing of the courtiers, they leave. It will be noticed that the queen does not ask that Rama should be exiled, as in the epic. In the next scene, a Malay king, monarch of a neighbouring kingdom, is holding court, when a messenger enters and announces the arrival of two princes and a princess, attended by only two or three retainers. The king gives orders for them to be invited, and on learning the identity of the strangers and the reason of their journey, the king offers his throne to Rama, who, however, refuses to accept it. The king then begs Rama to rest a few days, to which request the latter agrees. In the next scene, the ministers in Rama's palace are begging Bharata to take the throne, but he refuses to do so as long as Rama is alive. In the next scene, a messenger is refused admission to the palace of the Malay king by an attendant of Rama, who has been appointed to guard the palace gates. Blinded by conceit, the guard brags to the messenger and a humorous conversation follows until the guard recognizes the messenger as an attendant on Bharata, who is announced as waiting at the city gates. In the next scene, Rama refuses to return to his kingdom until the promised fourteen years have elapsed, and Bharata sadly returns home with Rama's sandals. Rama bids farewell to the Malay king, and amidst the homage and wailing of the court, Rama,

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Sita and Lakshmana leave for the forest. The Malay king is a Siamese invention. Though the Burmese translation terms him the Malay king, it is difficult to say where the kingdom was supposed to be as the Burmese call not only Malays but Cambodians and Javanese 'Malay'. There are three explanations of the introduction of the Malay king's court into the play. First, it is probably an acknowledgement of the indebtedness of the Siamese to the neighbouring regions for the story of Rama. Second, the Siamese wanted to lay the scene of the story as near Siam as possible. Third, the Siamese play is essentially a court play, dealing with court-inmates, and with scenes mostly laid at court; the court of the Malay king gives yet another court scene. The next scene is the court of the demon king and we understand that the forest is his domain. In this scene, the sister of the demon king tries to make love to the two brothers but she is not successful. It is not a comic scene as in the *Rama Lila*, and no nose is cut off. She returns to her brother, who at first refuses to interfere with Rama, but agrees to do so when he learns that Sita is with Rama. We are told that the demon king had been an unsuccessful applicant for the hand of Sita before her marriage. The sister turns herself into a doe and Rama is pressed to give chase to it by Sita. Rama, full of evil forebodings, marks on the ground a circle around Sita, praying that no evil being should enter the circle. The doe is shot and as she lies dying, she shouts: 'Lakshmana, help!' Sita begs Lakshmana to go to Rama's help, in spite of the strict command given to him not to leave Sita's side. The demon king now appears, but he cannot enter the magic circle. He is in the guise of a hermit, and as he preaches and begs for food, Sita gradually comes out of the circle. He makes advances, but is unsuccessful. He then seizes Sita and flies away in his flying carriage. The death of the demon king's sister is moving and strikes in a note of pathos, for she dies by the hand of the one she loves. The incident of the magic circle is very dramatic, and the idea of such a circle is borrowed from folklore common both to the Siamese and the Burmese. Rama and his brother then go in search of Sita, and after much wandering, they fall asleep in each other's arms under a tree. Sugriva, the deposed king of the monkeys, is on the tree, and in a soliloquy, he admires the love for each other of the brothers, and regrets that his own brother should be so heartless. He drops a tear which falls on the sleeping princes, who are awakened by it. Rama aims an arrow at the monkey, who begs for mercy and tells

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his tale. This meeting of Rama and the monkey king is more dramatic than that described in the epic. In the epic, a spirit advises Rama to seek the monkey king, whereas in the Siamese play the meeeting is accidental and more plausible. Rama agrees to help Sugriva. The next scene is again a court scene—the court of the usurping monkey-brother. A battle follows soon after, in which the usurper is killed, to the great sorrow of his queen, who, however, returns to the arms of her first and rightful husband. Sugriva then sends Hanumat as a spy to the demon king. Hanumat succeeds in learning Sita's whereabouts and then opens the gates of the demon city for Rama and his army of monkeys to enter. There is a great fight and the demon king is slain. Rama refuses to take back Sita, who, however, proves her purity by an ordeal by fire. They are crowned king and queen on their return to Rama's own city. The happy ending was perhaps just to please the happy throng who witnessed the play in holiday mood, or perhaps it was borrowed from Sanskrit plays. The Sanskrit dramatist aimed at harmony in every way, and to him, a happy ending was the only ending possible; virtue must be rewarded and lovers must be united. In the Sanskrit plays based on the epic, Sita is always restored to Rama, thereby rejecting the more artistic separation after vindication. The Siamese play and the Sanskrit plays were the productions of courts where polygamy prevailed and women had very little say in the matter. If Rama took back Sita, all was well. The court could not see, or refused to see, that Rama did not deserve Sita after all; after various sufferings, after her faithfulness to Rama, after a captivity against her will, Rama was cruel enough to denounce her as impure.

Though the Siamese *Rama* had many characteristics of a proper play, it had many elements of the kind which we find in the Elizabethan masque. The actors and actresses wore gorgeous dress. Though the majority of the performers were professionals, many lords and ladies probably took part often, for at the Burmese court exiled members of the Siamese nobility took part in the earlier presentations of the play, but it may be that they had to do so as teachers of the new art of court dramatic performance. Music and song were essentially connected with the play, and all the characters danced. There was no scenery, and change of scene was denoted (apart from references in the dialogue) either by the characters leaving the stage, or when some of the characters were supposed to be going on a journey, the actual journey was bridged over by the orchestra playing while the characters

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walked up and down the stage—a dramatic practice which was taken from the Siamese and used on the Burmese stage. The language was the language of the court, artificial, but not so removed from reality as to prevent it from being understood by the lowest classes. The play was mostly in verse. The prose was poetic and elegant except in comic scenes.

When the Burmese conquered Siam in 1767, they were able to take the play back with them for various reasons. The play was to both nations a *Jataka* story. The manners and the language of the Siamese court, as depicted in the play, were similar in many ways to those of the Burmese court. The mythology was common to both nations. The play was easy of reproduction at the Burmese court because of the many characteristics common to both countries, and because the captive and exiled members of the Siamese nobility at the Burmese court were ready and willing to help not only because they were anxious to teach the new art to their conquerors, but also because they missed an entertainment to which they had been accustomed for generations.

3. The *Rama* Play at the Burmese Court

The age that followed the conquest of Siam in 1767 was one of triumph. In 1752 the Burmese Empire had been destroyed by the Talaings, and the conquerors were ruthlessly putting into practice their policy of stopping the continual war between Burmese and Talaing by exterminating the Burmese as a race. In the same year, however, a humble villager arose, rallied the Burmese around him, with the result that five years later the mighty Talaing Empire was destroyed and the Talaings as a race disappeared from Burma. The obscure villager became the great Alaungpaya, founder of the famous dynasty that bore his name. He tried to conquer Siam, but died when victory was in sight. His son, Hsinbyushin, carried on the war, and continued the extension of the Empire. Manipur was soon conquered, and in 1767 Siam was completely crushed and its capital destroyed. The Siamese court was taken captive to the Burmese capital. The weary army was given no rest, however, for the Chinese had invaded Burma. From 1765 to 1769, the Chinese carried on a serious campaign against Burma. There were four distinct invasions, but each was repulsed. In 1769, the Chinese defeat was complete. Of that age of triumph, Harvey says:

The victory [against the Chinese], coming as it did on top of a

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generation of continual warfare which might well have exhausted the race, shows that the exploits of Alaungpaya were no mere flash in the pan, but were broad-based on the energy of the race as a whole. . . . The chronicles for the period are verbose and pompous, but it is impossible to read them without being struck with their fierce pride.[1]

It was during this age of triumph, after the Chinese invaders had been sent back defeated and people could breathe again without anxiety, that the Siamese *Rama* was produced at the Burmese court for the first time.

The court of Ava, then the capital of Burma, was in many ways comparable to the court of Elizabeth after the victory over Spain. Glory and wealth and splendour surrounded the king and his courtiers. Masters in the arts of war, they were also masters in the arts of peace. Almost everyone was learned, and the ablest soldiers and statesmen were also the foremost poets. Queens and ladies-in-waiting vied with princes and lords in the study and practice of learning and literature. Experts in the study of Pali, Sanskrit, and Buddhistic lore, keen students of foreign institutions and literatures, they were essentially Burmese, and enriched their own language and literature with borrowings from all sources. The period 1770 to 1824, the date of the first British conquest, that period of triumph, may easily be termed the age of translations, so keen were the people for knowledge from all sources. Siamese romances, Pali *Jatakas*, Chinese histories, Siamese and Cambodian chronicles, a history of Portugal, a Sanskrit work on sexual science—this list made at random shows clearly the range and variety of the translations. The court led the people in the pursuit of learning and literature. The courtiers were learned, the king was a patron of learning, and at the court the captives and hostages numbered among them great scholars and poets from conquered States. After the toils of war, men turned towards learning for rest and recreation. Men gloried in their country and studied their own literature, history, and institutions, and that study naturally led to the study of those of other countries. Almost everyone studied and almost everyone wrote. The age of triumph was an age of learning.[2]

The Siamese court plays appealed to the imagination of the court. The Siamese captives longed for their native entertainment.

[1] *History of Burma*, p. 258.

[2] Some account of the learned atmosphere of the court and of its more famous translators and poets is given by G. E. Harvey, op. cit., pp. 249 and 250.

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536* gesture passed on to the Burmese reproduction of the play. The rigid
261 tradition soon called forth protests, if not in actual words, then in deeds. If the *Rama* play could not be changed to meet Burmese tastes, other plays would have to be invented. As a result, a native court drama came into being.[1]

4. The Burmese Court Drama

536* It was during the reign of Hsinbyushin under whom the victories
175 against the Siamese and the Chinese had been won, that the *Rama*
644 play was first presented at court. He was succeeded by Singu, who
538 was king from 1776 to 1782. Singu could appreciate and compose good poetry when sober, but such occasions were rare. All the same, the learned atmosphere of the court was maintained, for his queen, the daughter of the famous commander-in-chief who defeated the Siamese and the Chinese invaders, was an accomplished poet herself, and she ever encouraged the continued presentation of the Siamese *Rama* at court. Singu was followed by Bodawpaya (1782–1811), who was one of the strongest despots that ever sat on the Burmese throne. But his despotism was of the enlightened kind, and under his patronage, the learned atmosphere of the court remained unimpaired. The earlier half of his reign saw the rise of a Burmese court drama.

Some time about the year 1783, a young courtier came to the forefront of scholastic circles at the court. This young man, who was a typical product of the age of learning, which was also the age of triumph, had distinguished himself in various campaigns when he began his literary career by composing songs modelled on those of the Siamese *Rama*. He was essentially a scholar, learning and experimenting, and he was an accomplished student of literature, both
[185] Burmese and foreign. But in spite of his great learning, he kept his own writings free from too rich an imagery and too bombastic a language; his Burmese was simple and pure. He wrote in the language of the court but without artificiality, so that his songs were not only admired at court, but understood and sung by the common people. After making his name as a song-writer, he produced various literary works of all kinds and thus enhanced his reputation, until he reached the zenith of his literary career in about the year 1785, when he composed and produced the first Burmese court play. This young

[1] Extracts from the *Ramayana*, *The Statue Play* attributed to Bhana, and the Siamese-Burmese *Rama* play are given in appendix i.

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courtier later won fresh fame as a statesman and judge, becoming known to history as the Minister Myawaddi.[1]

As has been stated, there was at the Siamese court a companion play to *Rama*. It was known as *Aindarwuntha*. There was also a Siamese court romance of the same name and dealing with the same theme. Aindarwuntha was a prince-soldier, and he had two sets of adventures, one amorous and the other martial. Myawaddi was one of those who broke away from the tradition that the Siamese models at the Burmese court must be preserved without any substantial change. He did not want to have his hands tied through this tradition, and so he did not translate the play, *Aindarwuntha*, but translated instead the court romance. Then he dramatized the romance, and called his new play, not *Aindarwuntha* but *Eenaung*.[2] In *Eenaung*, Myawaddi rejects the heroic adventures and tells only of the hero-prince's romantic intrigues.

The play is far too long. The *Rama* play was long, too, and it took two or three days to present it entire. The court had all the leisure in the world. *Rama*, if translated, would require about 400 of these pages. *Eenaung* is longer; it would be about 600 pages. The play was written more to be read than acted, and as far as is known, it was never presented entire. Only some scenes were acted. The play on the whole is disjointed; it is merely a collection of scenes, connected only through the personality of the prince. As the adventures are purely amorous, there is no action at all. We are told occasionally that the prince has gone on a journey or that he has achieved a conquest, but the scene is always the palace. Following the Siamese style, music and song are important elements in the play, but dances and fine dresses are absent. It is not a masque.

The merit of the play lies in its language, dialogue, and characterization. It is the language of the court, refined and elegant as that of *Rama*. But a certain element of simplicity is in it, and it is not too rich in words or in imagery, so that the common people could understand and appreciate it; in short, the usual clear style of the author, which is the hall-mark of his other writings, is also found in this play. In dialogue, the play retains the freshness and liveliness of the *Rama* play. In characterization, the play is a great advance on *Rama*

[1] An account of his career is given in G. E. Harvey, op. cit., p. 296.

[2] The play *Aindarwuntha* or *Eenaung* has been mentioned earlier in this chapter, on pp. 36 and 44–5.

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who put themselves under the patronage and protection of some noble lord in Elizabethan England.

Though the various plays presented at court were performed all over the country in little towns and little courts, the *Rama* play alone reached the remotest corners of the country, and it alone took root in the hearts of the people. What they wanted was action, and of the court plays, only *Rama* could satisfy the desire for action. The original Siamese version had been dead for some time even at court, and what the people saw were adaptations, which contained elements borrowed from the *Nibhatkhin* and the interlude. The story was shortened, many of the palace-scenes cut out, romantic love-scenes between Rama and Sita put in, and the demon king became a comic villain, whom everyone laughed at and liked. The villain as a popular comic character was borrowed straight from the *Nibhatkhin* and the interlude, where the Burmese equivalent of the devil in the English miracle plays, kept the audience in roars of laughter.

There was another important reason why the *Rama* play was so popular, and why the play became more and more Burmese. Under King Singu, while the court contented itself with the Siamese version, a poet outside the court circle broke completely away from the Siamese tradition and recast the story in a purely native form. U Toe, who became famous among the people under Singu and who was given official rewards and recognition under Bodawpaya, was termed the 'Great Master of the *Yagan*'. The *Yagan* is a romance in verse. It probably developed out of the *Hanta*, a dramatic recitation of a story, but in the *Yagan* the dramatic element is subordinated to poetic description. The most famous of U Toe's *Yagans* was the *Rama-yagan*. In the history of Burmese poetry it enjoys a very important place. It is famous for the clearness and beauty of the language, for beautifully coined words and for richness in imagery. He may be termed the Burmese 'poet's poet' because his language inspired other poets to imitate his style. The *Rama-yagan* was studied by his courtier-contemporaries although he was outside the court; and imitations of his style are found in the works of Burmese authors, including U Pon Nya and authors of the present day.[1]

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[1] An admirable account (in Burmese) of the importance of the *Rama-yagan* in Burmese literature and its influence on U Pon Nya is given in U Po Kya's *The Water-seller's Play of U Pon Nya*, a textbook of the Council of National Education.

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However, what concerns us here is his treatment of the story. He does not treat the story as an epic but as a romance. He follows the Siamese version as far as the main incidents of the story are concerned, but his scenes and characters are Burmese, and the life reflected in the poem is the life of the Burmese people in his day. For example, he describes in detail the various festivities on the occasion of Rama's marriage to Sita, and the scene U Toe describes must have been common in the life of the people:

From the dawning of the day, music and dancing did not stop, and silence was banished for long. Acrobats climbed poles, jumped through loops, balanced themselves on ropes, and people threw up their swords in the air and caught them in their hands again, so pleased they were. Drums said, 'Bain, bain, bain!' and the master of drums shouted, 'We are the makers of noise'. Dancers danced and drums played so loud that every person who had a good arm raised it in a dance. Noise, laughter, shouting, music, the feast was an occasion for shows wondrous and entertaining.

The love-scenes between Rama and Sita are no doubt taken from the life of many a Burmese man and maid. In portraying his characters, U Toe makes them more human and nearer to the life of the people. They are princes and princesses, but they are shown to have all the passion and sorrow and laughter of ordinary persons. In describing the characters, he uses terms applicable to the common people, and not to ladies and lords. In describing Sita, he calls her *lonma-galay* or 'little maid', a colloquial term used among the people and not at the court:

Her voice was clear and bell-like, as lovely to hear as music. She could use a crying tone, begging tone, musical tone. Oh, my hand is shaking with desire to imitate her voice on my harp. Little maid, little girl, how beautiful you were!

Throughout the poem there is an undercurrent of gentle satire and humour.

The poem of U Toe was read throughout the country and prepared and taught the people to appreciate the *Rama* play. It taught the professional actors to put more life, more realism into the play. The result was the rise of a national drama, where the elements of the *Nibbatkhin*, the interlude, and the court drama were combined and mixed. Everywhere there were theatrical shows, and the actors and dramatists struggled and experimented. It is unfortunate that none of the plays of those dramatists that entertained the people has come down to us. As they were experimental and unfinished, no one

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thought of writing them down and preserving them. But there are accounts describing the dramatic performances of the period, and in the dramatic works of U Kyin U we find echoes of those early plays.[1] Therefore, we at least know that a national drama came into being towards the end of Bodawpaya's reign. It is interesting to note that the rise of a real national drama coincided with fresh conquests by the Burmese. Arakan and Assam fell into Burmese hands under this king.

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With the rise of a more realistic national drama, the artificial drama of the court must naturally decay. Already the court drama itself was becoming less artificial, as we have seen, even in the hands of the court dramatists. But their plays, though far more realistic than the translation of the *Rama* play, were still artificial. Adaptations of *Rama* performed at the court were the beginnings of the decay. The decay was furthered by the popularity of U Toe's poem at Bodawpaya's court. It was read again and again by the author before the king. From such readings the court no doubt gradually went over to the national and more realistic drama, and it is perhaps legitimate to assume that plays presented at court in the closing years of the reign were mostly people's plays. The ascension of Bagyidaw to the throne in 1819 on the death of his royal grandfather destroyed finally the court drama, for his queen was of low origin, coarse, uneducated; and learned lords and ladies, poets and scholars, shunned the court. And it was in Bagyidaw's reign that the age of triumph ended with the annexation in 1824 of two of the three maritime provinces of Burma by the British. Under his descendant Mindon, who became king in 1853, the learned atmosphere of the court was fully restored, and U Pon Nya wrote his plays and produced them at court. But as his plays did not differ much from, and were dependent on, the people's drama of his day, he did not in any way revive that special court drama which entertained the Minister Myawaddi and his fellow-courtiers.

[1] The indebtedness of U Kyin U to his precursors is considered in the next chapter.

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536* of the interlude were religious feast days, and out of respect for those 779 occasions, the story had to be religious. Moreover, the interlude had 178 to contend with the *Hawsa* or dramatic recitation by one person of a story, which was a rival in popularity; and all *Hawsas* were based on [538] religious stories. However, the most important reason why the interlude had to depend again on the *Jatakas* for its stories was the great popularity of the works of U Awbatha.

538 Shin U Awbatha was a monk who lived during the reigns of 178 Bodawpaya (1782–1819) and Bagyidaw (1819–37). He was a product 195 of the age of learning. Famed for his piety, religious learning, and [192] knowledge of Sanskrit and Pali, he chose, like his contemporaries, to write in Burmese, and he enriched Burmese prose. The prose before him had been much neglected. The scholars were more interested in verse. When they did write prose, they never succeeded in forgetting that they were essentially verse-writers, and they used rhymed, balanced, and measured phrases. They used too rich an imagery. They broke into verse when they wanted to express any intensity of feeling. Often they introduced Pali words into their writings when there were more suitable Burmese ones. Burmese prose before U Awbatha was in the same position as English prose before Dryden. U Awbatha introduced a prose which was expressive and clear, simple yet effective. It was used to convey varieties of feelings and emotions, but it was always kept restrained and was never allowed to lose its [871] clearness. His works are still well known and popular. The importance of U Awbatha to Burmese language and literature can be judged from the fact that from the junior forms to the Honours course in Burmese at Rangoon University, his books are textbooks.[1]

538 There are hundreds of Birth Stories, but the most important 178 are the *Ten Big Jatakas*. They are much longer than the rest. U Awbatha wrote Burmese prose versions of the eight longest of those. He followed closely the Pali originals as far as the incidents of the stories were concerned, but he portrayed character in detail, and made the characters more lifelike and therefore more interesting. The story was very well retold, but he was equally masterful in the portrayal of character and in his understanding of human psychology.

He wrote his first *Jataka* in 1785 when Burmese arms were flashing victorious in Assam and Manipur, but vainglorious references to contemporary events found no place in his works. In the peaceful

[1] A short account of U Awbatha is given in G. E. Harvey, op. cit., p. 269.

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atmosphere of a secluded monastery on the outskirts of the little town of Minbu, were the works composed. U Awbatha concerned himself, not with fleeting victories and events, but with the essential characteristics and emotions of human beings. Therefore, at the present day when few remember the victors and victories of the age of triumph, all read and enjoy the works of the learned monk. Though his first *Jataka* was composed in 1785, his works did not reach the height of their popularity until about 1800 when the interlude had been influenced by the court plays. The popularity of the *Jataka* stories of U Awbatha made the precursors of U Kyin U go back to the Birth Stories for inspiration. Though many such stories were presented on the stage, the interludes of the period dealt mostly with the eight made popular by the monk. Apart from the fact that the public probably demanded interludes based on these, the various scenes and characters in U Awbatha's works were good material for dramatization. Moreover, the fact that the stories were well known to the audience made it possible for the dramatists to take only the central events of the stories, leaving out minor and less dramatic scenes. Through that knowledge, too, dramatic irony resulted.

Though U Awbatha never had any interest in the drama of his day, he indirectly saved Burmese drama from sinking into mere bombastic and rhetorical dramatic performances. The national victories and the resulting increase of martial spirit could easily have caused Burmese drama to fall away from the promising beginnings and early development through the influence of *Rama* and the court plays; Burmese plays could easily have become similar to the military plays of China, in which heroes and villains did nothing but fight, and one glorious victory followed another, to the worst Elizabethan chronicle plays and to the worst heroic plays of the Restoration. U Awbatha's works taught the interlude to concern itself more with the portrayal and study of character and to keep the presentation of heroic deeds and vainglorious speeches under control. He came in time. The *Rama* play favoured rhetorical rants and heroic deeds. The Minister Myawaddi did much to create an interest in the study of character and to put the drama nearer to real life. But *Rama* was so popular, and the national victories continued to come one after another so rapidly that the minister's influence on the interlude was being undermined. We have no example of the interlude of the period, but from stage tradition, contemporary references, and the echoes of it in the plays of U Kyin U, we can

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guess that the interlude was rapidly becoming heroic when the popularity of U Awbatha's works showed it the way to better things.

The return of the interlude to the fold of the *Jataka* did in no way make the drama suffer. The range was not narrowed, because the Birth Stories were numerous and they were concerned with all classes of society and all classes of events. The *Jataka* was a developed art. Some of the stories existed in India long before the time of the Buddha and therefore they were artistically finished through retelling by generation after generation. In short, the *Jataka* was an artistic and finished short story. It was religious and it concerned itself with a moral, but the moral suggested itself and was not pointed out; the artistic qualities of the *Jataka* did not suffer because it was never pointedly didactic. Moreover, a *Jataka* contained always some interpretation of life, a view of life from a different standpoint. Therefore the interlude gained by returning to the Birth Stories for its themes.[1]

2. The Life of U Kyin U

The existing accounts regarding the life of U Kyin U are very meagre. Even those were obtained only through painstaking research by the learned editors of the Burma Research Society's editions of his two plays, *Parpahein* and *Daywagonban*.

U Kyin U lived during the reigns of Bagyidaw (1819–37) Tharrawaddy (1837–46) and Pagan (1846–53). The exact dates of his life and writings are not known. He was a native of the little town of Sinbaungwe, but he migrated to the capital where he wrote his works, returning to his native town when he had retired from active literary and dramatic life. He was learned and knew Pali, Burmese literature, Burmese history and probably Siamese; at least he knew the Siamese court drama well. He probably first won fame as a writer of songs and speeches for characters on the stage, and in later life a collection of these was published. After he had thus won fame, he probably either set up a troupe of actors of his own or was engaged by such a troupe as its official dramatist; in any case, he was connected with the acting profession and the stage, and he wrote his plays in outline only, many scenes being left to be filled in later when the plays were being presented, very probably under his direction; his plays were merely stage copies and were not intended to be read. He won fame as dramatist

[1] For this section, I am greatly indebted to my sister's M.A. thesis at Rangoon University, entitled *The Jatakas in Burma*.

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CHAPTER IV

U PON NYA

1. The Life of U Pon Nya

U Pon Nya was born about the year 1807. His father was a minor nobleman at the court of Prince Tharrawaddy, a younger brother of King Bagyidaw (who lost the war against the British), and the young boy was brought up under the patronage of the prince. He was a precocious child and was placed under the tutorship of the most learned monk of the day. The prince rebelled against his brother and became king in 1837. U Pon Nya, in the meantime, had become a monk. During the rebellion, his father fell fighting for the prince, and the new king wanted U Pon Nya to take his father's office, but the future dramatist preferred to remain a monk. King Tharrawaddy continued to consider himself as godfather to U Pon Nya, who therefore was in constant contact with the court. On the death of that king, his son Pagan ascended the throne, and U Pon Nya left the capital for the little town of Salè, where he began to compose literary essays in about 1847. His essays and lyrics became immensely popular, and he came to be known all over the country as the 'Master of Salè', by which name he is more commonly referred to. In 1850 he became a layman again, and was appointed a court poet at the court of Prince Kanaung, a brother of the reigning king, Pagan. In 1851 Burma went to war again with the British and lost some more territory. Prince Kanaung and his other brother, Mindon, rebelled against the half-mad king. Mindon became the new king and made peace with the British. Kanaung became the crown prince, and U Pon Nya his official poet. He was then already recognized by the nation as the foremost poet, scholar and essayist of the day. He wrote astrological works and won further fame as an astrologer. He believed that he was liable to die on the scaffold and asked for a proclamation by the king exempting him from punishment by death; otherwise he begged to leave the court for the monastery. The required proclamation was made.

Zi: Hla Aung S-5 (ca. 1930) 1957 AP1 Burma
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Thaton, and the bragging hunter in the 'Baboon Play'. Hopeful is an artistically drawn character, and the cuckoo scene is delightful. Other decadent dramatists, though inferior in other respects to the authors of the three plays that I have considered in detail, equal them in comic scenes. The chief fault of the decadent dramatists lies in their inability to portray character, for their 'serious' characters are lifeless; but their comic ones are satisfactory, because although these lack depth, the 'humours' are well shown.

In lyrical beauty the decadent dramatists achieve some distinction. The quality of their verse, especially in songs, is uniformly high. It has a note of tenderness and wistfulness. It will not be out of place perhaps to consider here the verse of Burmese drama. The interlude was mostly in verse, for the actors were primarily singers, and perhaps because of the influence of the *Hsaya* which was a story in verse. The comic characters in the interlude seem to have used prose. The verse was of the variety called the 'four-syllabled line'. Burmese verse depends on rhyme, the number of syllables in each line, and the number of lines. In the 'four-syllabled line' verse, however, the number of lines is not fixed, and therefore a passage can be of any length, provided it has only one rhyme scheme. Each line has four syllables (as Burmese is monosyllabic, each syllable usually means a word). The first line contains a syllable which rhymes with those contained in the second and third lines. But the third, if it is a 'key' line, will contain another syllable which rhymes with the fourth and fifth lines, or fifth and sixth lines. The following diagram will perhaps make it clear:

```
– – – a
– – a –
– a – b   'key' line
– a – –
– – b –
– b – –
– – b –
– b – c   'key' line
– – c –
– c – –
```

The 'key' line with two rhymes need not occur at regular intervals. Although the first 'key' line in a passage usually occurs before the sixth line, it is quite common for the next 'key' line to occur as late as the sixteenth line. It will be seen that the purpose of the

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'key' lines is to link the various rhymes of the whole passage. This rhyme scheme is the basis of the 'four-syllabled' variety of verse, but more elaborate schemes are used, especially in U Pon Nya's *Paduma*. The translations of the Siamese plays were mostly in prose, except in songs, which of course were in all varieties of verse. The verse of the interlude was formless and experimental, and U Kyin U is credited with giving form and strength to it. He did not use any prose, for there was no need to do so as he wrote no comic scenes, which the audience of the day would naturally expect to be in prose. For his verse he used the 'four-syllabled' variety, but he introduced variations into it. Sometimes he used a slightly elaborate rhyme scheme, and often he used five or six syllables in one line, thus relieving the monotony that naturally occurred in long speeches. The artistic quality of U Kyin U's verse was its strength, and one may well call it 'U Kyin U's mighty line'. He treated specially of heroes and heroic deeds, and the verse suited his plays. U Pon Nya retained the 'four-syllabled' verse, but he took great liberties with the number of syllables, and often he made his lines contain seven or eight syllables. He was also very fond of using a line containing only three syllables. He used elaborate rhyme schemes, pleasing to the ear, with a musical effect comparable to that in Spenser's *Epithalamion* and *Prothalamion*. The following scheme, taken from the speech of Paduma's princess in which she makes love to the criminal, will perhaps give an idea of the elaborateness:

–	–	–	a			
–	–	a	–			
–	a	–	b			
–	–	–	c			
c	–	b				
–	b	–	d			
–	–	–	a			
–	–	a	a			
a	a	–	d	–	–	
–	d	–	–	e	–	–
e	–	f				
f	–	b	–	x	y	z
–	–	g	a			
g	a	a	a			
–	a	–	–	x	y	z

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U Pon Nya had many comic scenes which were mostly in prose, but not always. He was so fond of rhyme that he often used it in his prose. As his verse often had seven or eight syllables in one line, and as his prose contained rhymes, sometimes it was difficult to say whether a passage was in prose or in verse. *The Water-seller* was mostly in that half-prose, half-verse style. The decadent dramatists retain the four-syllabled verse, but following U Pon Nya, they use variations. Their songs, however, are in all varieties of verse. Whether in song or in dialogue, they attempt to convey not strength, but pathos and tenderness. Their prose, in contrast, is very bare and therefore suited to their comic scenes. The history of the style of verse in Burmese drama may perhaps be made clear by a reference to the Elizabethan drama. U Kyin U was a Marlowe, U Pon Nya a Shakespeare, and the decadent dramatists are Fords.

Because of the great similarities, one is tempted to compare the decadent Burmese drama with the decadent Elizabethan drama. In both there is the same love of pathos, sentimentality, and horror. To take examples off-hand, Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* and our 'Baboon Play' touch on incestuous love in order to arouse both pity and horror, and the execution scenes in *The History of Thaton* and the 'Baboon Play' are comparable to the assassination scenes in Webster. The love of spectacle is common to both decadent dramas. We even find in the Burmese decadent drama a sentimental attitude towards kingship and royalty comparable to the attitude of some characters in Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Maid's Tragedy*. The similarities are so evident that one wonders whether there is a similarity too between the causes of the decadence, whether the chief cause of the decadence in Burmese drama was because it had spent itself out in the hands of U Pon Nya and his contemporaries in the same way as the Elizabethan drama could be considered to have exhausted itself in the hands of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. But, as far as it is known, the age of U Pon Nya is not comparable to the age of Shakespeare, for Burmese drama, even during U Pon Nya's time, did not equal the Elizabethan drama in spontaneity or intensity. In spite of the fact that there were many imitators during his lifetime, U Pon Nya is the one dramatist of his period that we now remember, which seems to show that there was no outburst of national dramatic energy. And he was not a Shakespeare, and had by no means exhausted the possibilities of the drama when he was executed. Moreover, Burmese decadent drama is

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dawn broke and the audience dispersed to work, at the most only the first half of the play had been shown.

The continued contact with the outside world further elaborated the stage scenery. The great development was in the lighting. Even during the decadent period, the stage was lit only by feeble oil lamps, but now powerful battery and arc lamps were used. Coloured lights played on the dancing actors and actresses, to the great delight of the audience. The developments in stage technique which would have been beneficial had the drama been alive, were wasted in the hands of the actors.

The people themselves neglected the 'old' plays. U Kyin U and U Pon Nya seemed to belong to the dim past and even the decadent plays which flourished but five years previously seemed to be far away, for much had happened in the intervening years. Scholars continued to read and study the plays of the two great masters, but they were read more for their prose and poetry than for their dramatic merit. The reason why the 'old' drama was so completely forgotten is not far to seek. It was because of the popularity of the novel. When the Siamese drama was introduced into Burma, the Siamese court romances were introduced along with it, and for a time, at court, they rivalled the plays. The Burmese court dramatists wrote many imitations of the romances, and thus the Burmese novel was born. But, as the drama increased in popularity, the novel was soon forgotten. Again, when the court drama had lost its freshness, the Birth Stories of U Awbatha, which were in many ways novels, became popular, but the coming of U Kyin U regained for the drama its popularity, and checked any further development of the novel. The later history of the novel I do not profess to have studied—the subject is outside the scope of this thesis, and no one has as yet written on it—but I think that after the annexation of Upper Burma, by which time many Lower Burmans had been educated in English schools, English and English translations of European novels began to influence the Burmese novel. In about 1889 or 1890, there appeared the famous *Maung Yin Maung and Ma Mai Ma*, a brilliant adaptation into Burmese, by an unknown author, of an English translation of *The Count of Monte Cristo* by Dumas. And from that time onwards until 1919 when the English short story began to be imitated in Burmese, the novel was extremely popular and satisfied the people's interest in character and incident that had developed the drama. As has been stated, the non-existence of the throne prevented the rise of a new drama, but it was the

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536* 538 178 popularity of the novel which discouraged the people from reading the once-famous plays and caused the 'dead' drama to be forgotten.

536* Yet the dramatic performances were popular everywhere, and in the circumstances, 'matinee idols' adored by their admirers soon appeared. These popular actors and actresses were admired purely for their dancing and singing. The result was to put the play yet further into the background. When a performance started, the audience clamoured for their favourite actor or actress, and during scenes in which he or she did not appear, it went to sleep. Three of these popular 'stars' became exceptionally famous; Aungbala, Sein Kadon, and Po Sein.[1] When Aungbala died in 1910, his funeral at Mandalay was similar in nature and incident to that of Rudolph Valentino, the cinema actor. These three led famous troupes of their own and toured the country, which on the whole tended to lower even further the dramatic performances in artistic value. For example, Sein Kadon danced with little electric bulbs all over his dress, and Po Sein had two English ex-soldiers with rifles standing motionless on each side of the stage whenever he appeared. There is no denying that there had been threats against his life by supporters of rival troupes, but I do not think that the rifles were quite necessary. In any case, the fact that he was guarded by two live English ex-soldiers impressed the audience, increased his prestige, and enhanced the theatrical effect. Such 'playing to the gallery' by the actors further prevented the possibility of any revival of [554] scholarly interest in the dramatic performance. Moreover, as rival supporters spread tales of immorality and bad conduct among those actors whom they did not favour, the prejudice against the profession increased in intensity among the more conservative Burmese. And by about 1900, the performances could claim at the most only a distant relationship with the drama of U Kyin U and U Pon Nya.

2. The English Drama in Burma

536* 101 If we put the Sanskrit, Elizabethan, and Burmese dramas side by side, we find that the Elizabethan and Burmese have much in common, both differing greatly from the Sanskrit.[2] Of the Sanskrit drama Dr A. B. Keith says:

[1] Po Sein was decorated later by the Government. See chap. viii.

[2] Apart, of course, from the fact that the Sanskrit drama is classical in language and in age.

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18. YOUNG CHILDREN'S TOYS.

Manufactured toys are the most noticeable wares in the sale-booths. A universal toy is the seed from the giant pod of the *dô* creeper (No. 251). Like marbles with us, the seeds—*gôn-hnyin*—are the prizes of the game. In Sangermano's time (1783–1806) these games used to be played by adults. A characteristic boys' game is *sítôppyit* (No. 25). Lots are cast for riders and horses. A ball or bundle is thrown from rider to rider till a player misses the catch, when all the riders dismount and scramble with the horses for the ball. The one who secures it becomes or remains a rider as the case may be. Boys run races for their own sport and that of their elders, and race their toy boats. They fight duels with their kites, each flier seeking to saw through his opponent's kite-line, for which purpose a length of string has been roughened with sand or pounded glass. The peg-top is a favourite toy. That it is indigenous is proved by certain proverbial sayings. Burman boys are more like our own and take to European games more kindly than other Asiatics (*cf.* p. 69). The toy of the day is the tricycle, which parents will pinch themselves to provide for their children, and which the happy possessors of will make the common property of all their playmates. Where children awaken such genuine interest, punishment is rarely called for and is never

19. GAMES IN THE WATER.

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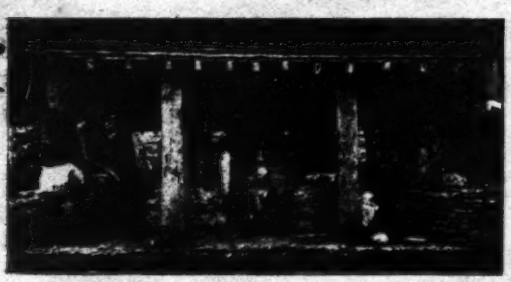

68. WUT WITH IMAGES OF THE BUDDHA

stars," the Burman says "countless as the temples of Pagán." The remains at Pagán are all ecclesiastical with the exception of the city gates and ramparts (No. 6). The temple enclosures are now ploughed, but no building is cleared nor is any of the old material utilised. The Pagán monuments are of brick laid in clay and generally lime-plastered. Many have been wrecked by treasure-hunters. A few of the principal temples only are kept in repair. Pagán is said to have been exhausted by the temple-building of its kings, who, besides exacting labour from their subjects, must have imported skilled labour. An old saying is "the temple is finished and the country is ruined." The temple remains occupy an area of several thousand acres, in many places with just room for roads between the walls of the enclosures. The style of the Pagán buildings is Indian. It has been suggested that the Hindu type of work and possibly Buddhism itself reached Pagán by way of Annam: the Mun or Peguan race, from whom the Burmans adopted Buddhism, having a language of Annam type. The great ruins at Angkor Wat, two hundred miles east of Bankok, have been compared to the ruins of Pagán. (See *Through the Buffer State*, by Surgeon-Major McGregor, 1896.) Such a route as this would help to account for certain features of Burman architecture foreign to India, the superposed roofs, and everted gable-ends. The Indian types may have reached Burma by this circuit as well as by the direct route.

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69. THADYA PAYA AT THATON.

The ancient temples of Pagán consist of brick corridors, one within the other, with vaulted pent roofs of masonry springing from the outer or lower wall to the inner or higher. The section of the vault is like that of a Gothic flying buttress. In the centre of all are colossal images

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77. IMAGE OF THE BUDDHA ENCIRCLED BY FICUS.

(*ôt-deitha*), where, after dedication, they cease to be private property. The sole virtue of these symbols lies in the pious intention with which they are dedicated. The figure of the disciple Ānanda is frequently placed in the houses or taken on journeys (No. 316).

Besides the reputed relics of the Buddha, the miraculous foot-prints which legend assigns to him on rocks in Burma and Arakán are venerated (*Chidaw-yá*). Every Burman knows that Gawdama never travelled out of Bahár and was in all respects as other men; the licence of the legend is a poetic one. Models of these foot-prints are placed in the temple precincts. Here conventionality reaches the extreme; the sole is laid out with rule and compass and the surface mapped into diagrams of cabalistic import (No. 450).

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The Buddhist scriptures should be deposited in masonry temples (*Bitaka-taik*, No. 66). These exist in a few places, but in general the scriptures are kept in special chests (*saddáik*) in the *kyaungs* (No. 453). The Shan-Tarôk (p. 146) place *saddáik* in their houses, and take pride in the volume of manuscripts these contain. The complete Páli text, together with the patristic commentaries and glosses, written on palm-leaf, would occupy a space of perhaps one hundred cubic feet. The text alone would cover about one thousand five hundred quarto pages of pica type. Only a few *kyaungs* possess the complete Tripitaka. Besides the scriptures, other ancient writings are treasured, such as the *kyauza* of cosmogony (see Sangermano), the *Zát* literature—the legendary lives of the Buddha in previous states of existence, embellished with romance of recent date.

78. IMAGE OF THE BUDDHA ON BALIN.

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Having made her evening toilet the girl takes some light work, such as cotton to roll for the wheel for the hour of *lwbyè-hlè*, as the dusk of evening is called, literally, the time of the "bachelors' round." The young men are expected to make short calls only, so as not to keep the old people up late. By "old men's sleeping time," as the hour after the short twilight is called, they must have left, so as to relieve the duenna, who, if not in sight, is always in waiting for the girls to come up into the house for the night. Courtship has quite a language of its own in which the suitor needs to be proficient. Young people of fashion are referred to as *kàlo-thá*, *kàlo-thamí*—lads and girls "of the period," who cultivate smartness in their speech, bearing and dress. The suitor brings presents of flowers and fruit and ornaments. Oranges, expensively stored one by one, long past the season, are for this sole purpose. Carved

146. TEA (LEPPEYYE).

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147. BELLE AT HER TOILET.

148. VILLAGE BELLE.

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149. THE SUITOR'S VISIT.

work-boxes, loom-laths, mirror-stands are often the lover's handiwork. Not the least of the lover's offerings is poetry. If he be a scholar, he will sing or recite to his mistress verses of his own in praise of her charms. But there are current ditties to the fancy of every one. The imagery which is the main feature of these odes, is borrowed from every source of beauty, blossom and flower, dewdrop and pearl, planet and star. Burmese metre is largely eked out with euphonic particles; at other times the diction is so compressed as to make the sense most difficult for a foreigner to grasp.

Marriages of affection are general. Romantic attachments are frequent in real life, as they are the rule in the play. The frequency of the mere marriage of convenience is not greater in Burma than in England or America. In this respect there is no parallel to the customs of the hill-tribes of Burma, the neighbouring Asiatic civilisations or even the Latin races of Europe. Their mutual qualities, physical, moral, and material, are for the most part known to the parties from childhood. Burmans evince an openness and frankness amounting to joviality, not to be met with in other parts of Asia. They indulge a much freer play of feature and yet greater freedom in the modulation of the voice. The term for betrothal—*sayán-pe*, earnest-money—testifies to the original purchase of the bride. In modern usage, however, the *sayán* is merely a share of the cost of outfit, according to means. It takes the form of a silk *htmáin* or a piece of jewellery for the girl, and is brought by the lad when he comes with his parents to ask the consent of the girl's parents to the marriage. Where parents oppose, runaway matches are frequent.

150. MARRIAGE CEREMONY.

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still is used by the Shans for their sacred MSS. The Burmans use the paper chiefly in the form of stiff tablets (*parabêik*), blackened, like the *thimbôn*, for writing on with a steatite pencil. Burmese type was cut (No. 452) and the first printing-plant set up in Burma by the American Baptist Mission. At present

274. PALM-LEAF MS.

there are a number of printing establishments owned by Burmans, from which quite a literature of their religious works has issued. At first the Buddhists of Burma considered print not good enough for the scripture canon. Modernised legends of the Buddha in his previous incarnations (*zat*) are beginning to form the foundation of a romance-literature of indigenous type. Newspapers have not yet taken a firm hold, even in the large towns; but news travels very fast in the ordinary way, especially news about the prices of goods. This western art has not contributed to the spread of western knowledge in the way that might be expected. The Yaw Mindyi, a minister of the late King Mindôn Min, made a most praiseworthy effort to popularise western ideas in a series of MS. treatises. A native undertaking upon a grand scale—nothing less than a Burmese encyclopædia—was on foot in the sixties, but fell through for want of organised support. In Japan, an analogous enterprise was successful. What applies to concerted action in matters like the above, applies equally to political combination. Few Burmans, even after years of schooling, learn enough to read an English newspaper with profit. To this day there is no Burmese manual for the study of English. The scholars learn only enough of the language to procure them employment as accountants and copyists. Similarly, there are few English who can understand a Burmese newspaper.

273. COPYIST AT WORK.

Dealers, with the exception of the

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The terseness of the language appears in its proverbs. 195

For instance, *Kwe-hlè khaùk phù ma-thì*—"The dog-flea may jump but it raises no dust." Seven syllables as compared with the ten of the almost monosyllabic English. In the above sentence the order of ideas is much the same as our own. But as a rule the order is the opposite. "Fetch hither water to quench the fire" is *mì thaphò yè yaŋ̀*, literally, "fire to quench, water fetch hither." The ideas are expressed in order of their practical importance. The checked mutes of the Burmese language give it an abruptness which is reflected in the *staccato* of the Burmese music. But Burmese possesses sonorous qualities also, for instance, *Shwè Sandaw Payà, Shwè Zigòn Payà*.

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The sounds of the letters used in this work for transliterating Burmese words are as follows:—

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Vowel-sounds.

a, e, i, o, u,	. . . . .	as in Italian
ò	. . . . .	„ English *bell* (but long in quantity)
ai	. . . . .	„ „ *aisle*
au	. . . . .	„ „ *cow*
aw	. . . . .	„ „ *caw*
ei	. . . . .	„ „ *eight*
Consonants	. . . . .	„ English, including the *th*, omitting *f*, *v*, and *z*.

Few Burmans can pronounce *r*, and generally substitute *y* for it in the Pâli words. All final consonants are mute. They are not wholly suppressed as they are in French, but are merely checked in pronunciation. The Burmese for *demon* is written *mat* in this work, because it is too inconvenient to indicate the checked mute by such a form as *mat*. The final *n* should, strictly speaking, be always followed by a *g* or a suggestion of *g*, thus *daghng* or *daghn'* instead of *daghn*. But to write it in this way is inconvenient in many of the combinations. This should accordingly be borne in mind. The combinative changes on the other hand which consonants undergo in certain positions have been incorporated in the spelling and not left to the reader to form. Instead of the current form *sit-hayìn* (chess), which correctly renders the Burmese spelling of the word, the form *sitthayìn* is used, which renders the actual pronunciation. The letter *h* combined with *y* has a varying force according to its position. Thus *hya* is pronounced just as written, but in the duplicated form *hya-hya*, the pronunciation is *tya-dya*. There are a few exceptions such as *hsàh-hyí* (scissors) pronounced as spelled. When the *h* is aspirated, its combination with *y* gives *tsh* (English *ch*) and *dzh* (English *j*). *Kyaung* (a monastery) is pronounced as written. In the compound *taw-kyaung* it is pronounced *taw-gyaung* (a forest monastery). But when it is the aspirated *h*, *taw-'kyaung* makes *taw-chaung* (a forest stream). The modulation of the voice differentiates it further, thus *taw-gyaùng*, with the second syllable rounded up sharply (wild cat). In deliberate utterance certain of these modifications disappear again; just as we

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488. BADAM (p. 22).